

SUBVERSIVE ACTS:
THE POLITICS OF THE FEMALE SUBJECT IN PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the role of theatrical discourse in the relationship between patriarchal ideology and gendered subjectivity. It explores ways in which theatre might be used to encourage the social transgression of patriarchal gender norms and investigates the problems associated with the practical realisation of these strategies for gender subversion.

The study is structured in two parts. Part I lays the theoretical foundation of the discussion. It argues, in Chapter One, that the concept of gender identity as a natural, inherent facet of human nature is an ideological construct and that gender is not, therefore, an innate aspect of all human beings, but rather a learnt behaviour. In Chapter Two, the connection between the social and theatrical performances of gender is made and the role of theatre in teaching the social performance of gender is examined. Part I concludes with an exploration into possible strategies for gender subversion within the paradigm of theatre.

Part II concentrates on the application of the theory discussed in Part I to the practice of theatre. Chapters Four and Five focus respectively on the author's

experiences of producing and receiving performance texts from a gender-subversive perspective.

In conclusion, this study argues that there are particular problems associated with attempting gender-subversion through theatrical performance texts, due to the extent to which patriarchal ideology is entrenched within the cultural practice of theatre. It also argues, however, that theatre offers unique potential for intervening in the interpellation of gendered subjects and as such, all attempts to use it to this end should be encouraged and supported.

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INTRODUCTION

The springboard into this study of the role of theatrical discourse in the relationship between ideology and gender identity came from my personal journey from Christian fundamentalism to lesbian, feminist activism. I spent the seven odd years from my mid-teens to early twenties as a devout member of the Charismatic Christian movement and it is as a result of this time spent struggling with the highly prescriptive, restrictive injunctions of the church with regards to gender and sexuality, that my gender consciousness, which motivated this study, was initially raised.

Through experiencing enormous conflict between my lesbian sexuality and my homophobic, fundamentalist faith, I became increasingly aware of the relationships between both gender and sexuality, and gendered subjectivity and ideology. I not only experienced the overt, externalised restrictions of the patriarchal ideology of the church - such as the practice of women having to cover their heads when speaking in church - but also recognised how it impacted on my own perception of myself as a woman. I found that I wanted to be able to conform to the standards and norms of femininity prescribed by the church and castigated myself harshly for failing to do so. Much of my sense of self worth and

acceptance at the time hinged on my capacity to fulfill the patriarchal gender expectations of my religious ideology. It was through this intensely personal and painful struggle to conform to patriarchal, heterosexualised constructions of femininity that I became acutely aware of a strong connection between subjectivity and ideology. I recognised a direct link between the ideological framework and an individual's understanding of self within that framework. It is this relationship between ideology and subjectivity that forms the starting point and foundation of this dissertation.

My experience of the extensive impact of fundamentalist religious discourse on my identity motivated a keen interest in how different discourses function to construct subjects in accordance with the ideology implicit within them. My particular focus on theatrical discourse in this dissertation was influenced primarily by two key factors. While I was still a member of the church, I rejected my homosexual lifestyle and identity, attempting to replace it with a heterosexual equivalent. This involved enormous attention to the external signifiers of identity. I discarded the behavioural and clothing codes I associated with my lesbianism and assumed the appropriate hairstyle, clothing, behaviour and attitude of a godly, young woman preparing for marriage. Through attempting this somewhat unsuccessful transformation, I was made acutely aware of the extent to which identity is performative. I was made aware of how a substantial proportion of gender identity

rests in the performance of socio-historically specific codes. Given my academic background in drama studies, I began to speculate as to the relationship between the social and theatrical paradigms of gender performance.

The second motivation lay in the frustrating absence of representations of gender transgression, in theatre as well as in various other fields of cultural production such as television, film, and print media. The process of abandoning my religious ideology in order to assimilate my transgressive gender and sexual identity into a coherent lifestyle was extremely difficult and lonely. My choice to commit gender 'sin' cost me friends, community and my faith. Consequently, I was eager to find representations of women that affirmed the painful decisions I had made. The absence of any such representations, combined with the overwhelming abundance of images coercing women into conforming to patriarchal constructions of femininity, provoked my determination to challenge patriarchal dominance in some way. The result was twofold. On the one hand, I undertook this study with the intention of both identifying how conservative theatre practice reinforces patriarchal gender values, which I discuss in Chapter Two of the dissertation, and how this theatrical practice might be subverted to encourage and affirm gender transgression, which I explore in Chapter Three. On the other hand, I set about devising a piece of gender-subversive theatre, The Soapflake Sonata, the making of which I evaluate in Chapter Four. The production was performed, both at the

Four. The production was performed, both at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, and at the University of Cape Town in July 1995.

In this discussion of gender and theatrical discourse, I have sought to bring theory to bear on practice and vice versa. At the very core of feminism is the inextricable relationship between theory and practice: between feminism as the foundation of theoretical frameworks and feminism as the basis of social, and political activism. For this reason I have divided my dissertation into two parts. In Part I, I develop the theoretical premises upon which my study is based. I begin my dissertation with an investigation into how the relationship between ideology and personal identity functions, paying particular attention to the impact of patriarchy on gendered subjectivity. Following this general discussion of ideology and gendered subjectivity in Chapter One, I discuss the particular workings of patriarchal ideology in theatrical discourse in Chapter Two and part of Chapter Three. I conclude Chapter Three and with it, Part I, with a discussion of strategies for gender-subversive theatre. In Part II, I apply the theoretical concepts discussed in Part I to the practice of theatrical production and reception in Chapters Four and Five respectively. I have chosen to locate the final two chapters of this dissertation in my personal experience as maker and spectator of theatrical performance texts. Not only does this subscribe to the feminist emphasis on the value of

personal, subjective experience but it is also appropriate to a study that is primarily concerned with subjectivity.

Consequently, I have not attempted to conceal myself in the writing of this document. On the contrary, I have located myself at the centre of the work, acknowledging my presence and subjective opinion through the consistent use of the first person throughout the discussion.

The Use of Pronouns

Given my particular focus on the female subject, I have attempted as far as possible to use feminine pronouns throughout the discussion. There are, however, points at which this is not appropriate: for example, in the discussion concerning the masculinisation of the generic subject in Chapter One. In these instances, I have used masculine pronouns. I have not altered the pronouns or the gender biased language within quotations. Thus references to the generic subject as male and the associated use of terms such as 'mankind' remain. They do not, however, reflect my own approach to the use of gendered language.

Use of Contentious or Borrowed Terms

I have chosen a particular convention to indicate a borrowed term, for example Monique Wittig's 'the myth of woman' or where the meaning of a word or phrase is contentious such as 'reality' or 'normal'. The first time a borrowed or contentious term or word is used it will be placed in quotation marks. Thereafter the term will be

taken as accepted, unless it requires a renewal of emphasis.

CHAPTER ONE

IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY:

PATRIARCHY AND THE SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF GENDERED SUBJECTIVITY

Gender: Personal and Political

Gender is a political issue. It is one of the primary determinants of social, political and economic power in almost every society. One would be hard pressed to identify a society, past or present, in which gender is not central to the unequal distribution of power. This inequitable access to political, social and economic power has historically privileged men over women, and contemporary societies continue to subscribe to a patriarchal axis of male domination.

This axis of discrimination intersects with a complex matrix of power relations which, like gender, are rooted in aspects of identity - such as class, race, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion and age. The list of identity differences upon which discrimination is based is endless. Although the question of gender cannot be discussed in isolation from other aspects of identity, my purpose in mentioning these facets of identity is not so much to discuss them per se but rather to draw attention to

the connection between identity and power, and, gender and identity.

Power is almost always fought for and organised on the basis of identity, whether it be gender identity, national identity, religious identity, racial identity or any other point of identification. Judith Butler in her article

'Imitation and Gender Insubordination' states that

identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression (1993:308).

Cheryl Mohanty echoes Butler in her description of the Eurocentric world as

traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance, a world which can be understood only in terms of its destructive divisions of gender, color, class, sexuality and nation (1991:2).

Whilst aspects of identity form the matrix for the organisation of power, identity is also the immediate and intensely personal position from which every person experiences the world. Identity informs subjectivity. Thus the compliance of women with 'social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men' (Weedon 1989:12) is an indication that gender oppression is not only located in external acts of domination such as violence, but that it has its roots in the way in which women and men understand and enact their own gender identities. The intersection of the personal, lived,

subjective experience of identity, and identity as a political issue is, thus, a crucial paradigm.

The argument of this chapter, which draws on the theories of Louis Althusser (1971), Michel Foucault (1981), Jacques Lacan (1977) and Judith Butler (1990), is that ideology and identity are inextricably entwined. Using these theorists, I shall argue that gendered subjectivity is an ideological effect. I will discuss how gender identity is constructed by patriarchal ideology, examining in particular the importance of the ideological illusion of

the position of the subject as fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience (Belsey 1980:90).

Having established that dominant, patriarchal ideology is perpetuated through the construction of subjects in keeping with its political agenda, I shall explore Butler's theory of gender as performative as a way of conceptualising gender.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity 'is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon 1989:32). In effect, subjectivity describes the individual's *perceived identity*. Her perceived identity determines how she sees herself and provides the framework through which she interprets herself and her experiences. Subjectivity, which is inextricable

from categories of identity such as gender, race, class, culture and others, is the means by which the individual makes meaning of her world.

Subjectivity is, hence, the filter through which the relationship between self and society is understood. It simultaneously positions the individual and provides the means through which to interpret that position. Position implies relationship, and relationship necessarily involves a distribution of power, given that 'power is a relation' (Weedon 1989:113). Consequently, subjectivity determines the extent to which the individual is empowered or disempowered by her identity.

Gendered Subjectivity

Gender is a key aspect of subjectivity. It is fundamental to how people experience and understand themselves in ways that potentially surpass many other aspects of identity. It is difficult to identify any area of human experience that is not touched by gender. Butler argues that gender is so central to identity that 'the mark of gender appears to *qualify* bodies as human bodies' (1990:111) [Butler's emphasis]. The immediate gender classification of new born infants, described by Kate Bornstein in her book, Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us (1995:46), begins a process of gender assignment that continues throughout every individual's life. This both contributes to, and is informed by the infusion of gender into almost every aspect of human experience.

Language, clothing, physical appearance and behaviour, recreational activities, occupations, parenting and other social roles, public and private spaces all carry gendered overtones to varying extents. An obvious illustration of this is the prevailing notion of the home, the kitchen in particular as a woman's domain. A less stereotypical example, however, was highlighted for me in a friend's recent experience of applying to study a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology. Of the seventy odd applicants, only four were men. This drew my attention to the continued gendering of occupations. Even as more and more women pursue careers, rejecting the traditionally female domestic roles, different occupations remain gendered in accordance with stereotypes of masculine and feminine qualities. Thus women are associated with healing, helping professions such as psychology, while men dominate the 'rational', more scientific arenas.

Gender codes such as those described above may differ according to context and culture, but regardless of context, they all inform how individuals understand themselves and experience their position within society. The very fact that these codes do alter according to socio-historic context is indicative of their organic, constructed nature, however, they 'appear to be the natural order' (Marshment 1994:123). It seems 'to be "common sense" that women should have babies and cook, that women cannot be company directors or bricklayers, that they should wish

to totter around on high heels to make themselves attractive to men'(123).

Given that people experience this natural order of gendered codes and behaviours through their extremely personalised subjectivities, the greatest pressure to conform to these 'norms' is often an internal as opposed to external one. For example, women may pressurise themselves into oppressive feminine stereotypes through the internalised belief that as women, they should want to raise children or that they should conform to contemporary notions of femininity in order to feel attractive.

Marshment argues that '[t]he apparent naturalness of this social arrangement is evidence of the success of patriarchal ideology'(1994:123-24). I would extend Marshment's argument to add that the apparent 'naturalness' of 'this social arrangement' is not only evidence of the success of patriarchy, but is the foundation upon which this success depends. By rendering oppressive gender roles and the inequitable power relations which accompany them natural, their continuance is ensured. The naturalisation of gender codes and cues is a patriarchal strategy for preserving male privilege. This strategy hinges on two crucial paradigms: the conflation of gender and biological sex, and the liberal humanist conception of the rational, unified subject.

The Liberal Humanist Subject

The ideology of liberal humanism assumes a world of non-contradictory (and therefore fundamentally unalterable) individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action (Belsey 1908:67).

The liberal humanist subject is a sovereign subject who, by virtue of his free will and rational mind, is in control of his actions and thoughts. He 'is "born" with all his faculties and is already predisposed to feel and act in certain ways. His fundamental characteristics are immanent' (Boal 1979:96). His identity is, therefore, innate, coherent and unchanging. Within this conceptualisation of the individual, gender identity is inherent and fixed.

This naturalisation of gender is further entrenched by the conflation of gender and sex. Physiological differences between the sexes (with which individuals are born) are used as concrete justifications for gendered differences in social, economic and political roles and behaviours. Within the patriarchal paradigm, biological sex is used to validate gender and sexuality. On the basis of the physically observable features of sex, gender categories and roles are verified along with assumed natural sexuality. For instance, the biological capacity of women to bear children is used to naturalise woman's role as mother and nurturer along with reproductive, heterosexual sex. Within this framework, gender and sex become the touchstones for each other.

Feminism, Gender and Sex

The phenomenon of gender and its relationship to physiological sex is a contentious issue. Even in the struggle for gender equality, there is no common conceptualisation of gender and hence, no common understanding of its relationship to sex among the various schools of feminist thought. For example, there are feminist writers such as Camille Paglia who perpetuate the conflation of gender with sex. In her book, Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence From Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson, Paglia writes that '[s]ex is the natural in man'(1991:1). On the basis of this assumption, Paglia argues essential differences between men and women. She blurs the distinction between gender and physiological sex to assert that gender differences are an inherent facet of human nature and are rooted in physiological differences.

In contrast to Paglia's essentialism is my conception of gender which, in the words of Simone De Beauvoir, is that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'(1989:267). However, where De Beauvoir argues that '[n]o biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human *female* presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature'(1989:267)[my emphasis], I would extend this argument to include the very concept of the rational subject, female or male as an *ideological construction*. I am concerned, therefore, with exploring the relationship between gender as a personal

experience and gender as a political signifier. The link between ideology and gendered subjectivity is critical.

Ideology and Subjectivity

Michelle Barrett defines ideology as 'a generic term for the processes by which *meaning* is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed'(1985:90)[my emphasis]. Christine Gledhill similarly defines ideology as 'any particular belief system used to explain society'(1994:109). By virtue of these definitions, ideology is a framework or filter through which personal experience is interpreted. Given that individual subjectivities function as the microcosmic frameworks within which gender is experienced and understood, I am interested in the link between the production of meaning on a broad ideological level and the production of meaning on the level of individual subjectivities.

Louis Althusser argues that there is a direct link between ideology and subjectivity. He contends that ideology structures the individual as a subject in accordance with its hierarchy of power. Ideology informs the individual's subjectivity through using language to interpellate her as a subject. While subjectivity may seem self-evident to the individual, it is, in fact, a product of ideology :

Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word "name a thing" or "have a meaning" (therefore including the obviousness of the transparency of language), the obviousness that you and I are subjects and that that does not cause any problems is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect (Althusser 1971:161).

Butler articulates a similar argument, in which she suggests that

the domains of political and linguistic "representation" set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed with the result that representation is extended only to what can be acknowledged as a subject. In other words, the qualifications for being a subject must be first met before representation can be extended (Butler 1990:1-2).

Althusser maintains that ideology 'recruits' or 'transforms' subjects through the process of 'interpellation' or the naming of subjects as subjects. The effect of ideology interpellating subjects as subjects is that 'in taking on a subject position, the individual assumes that she is the author of the ideology or the discourse that she is speaking' (Weedon 1989:31). She speaks or thinks as if she is in control of meaning. She 'imagines that she is indeed the type of subject which humanism proposes - rational, unified, the source rather than the effect of language' (Weedon 1989:31), with the result that she experiences her subjective position as an inherent, stable, self-determined identity.

The individual is led to believe in herself as a free agent. She imagines herself to be in control of her actions, thereby, experiencing an illusory power over meaning and action. By virtue of Althusser and Butler's arguments, however, she is an agent *within* a discourse as opposed to the author of that discourse. The discourse(s)

within which the subject is constructed serve to reinforce the framework presented by the particular ideology.

The Patriarchal Interpellation of Gendered Subjects

Althusser's (1971) theory of the relationship between subjectivity and ideology is not directly concerned with the formation of gendered subjectivity, but rather with the exploitative class relations of capitalism. Nonetheless, it offers useful insights into the connections between ideology, social practices, language and identity. Consequently, it can be usefully applied to an analysis of the relationship between gendered subjectivity and patriarchal ideology.

Althusser's theory when applied to gender suggests that patriarchal ideology produces gendered subjects and positions them (hence empowering or disempowering them) in accordance with its androcentric axis of domination. The resultant inequitable gendered power relations are likely to be accepted by these subjects who, through their ideologically constructed subjectivities, experience their gender as a natural, innate facet of their identity. These gender constructions are, thus, camouflaged under the guise of the natural order.

The Patriarchal Gendering of Agency

One of the primary discrepancies in power between female and male subjects is a result of 'the production of subjects who are presumed to be masculine' (Butler 1990:2).

This androcentric bias is not made explicit. Consequently, masculine subjects are presented as generic, gender-neutral representations of all humanity. The universalisation of the masculine subject is presented as natural, however,

[t]he universal has been and is continually, at every moment, appropriated by men. It does not happen, it must be done. It is an act, a criminal act, perpetrated by one class against another. It is an act carried out at the level of concepts, philosophy, politics'(De Beauvoir 1989:xxiii).

The naturalised, gender 'neutrality' of the masculine subject can be paralleled to Ruth Frankenberg's description of the 'unmarked, unnamed status' of whiteness which she argues 'is itself an effect of dominance'(1993:6).

Whilst the masculine bias of the universalised subject is not acknowledged, it does require an 'other' in order for the position of male privilege to be sustained. The female subject is the mechanism by which the male subject's position of power is secured. Patriarchy simultaneously hides the masculine bias of its generic subject and genders the female subject. Consequently,

[w]oman...is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute - she is the Other (De Beauvoir 1989:xxii).

The effect of this is the production of gendered subjects 'along a differential axis of domination'(Butler 1990:2). The female subject is differentiated from the generic (male) subject through being gendered. Thus

it is always woman's sexuality that is being constituted; Woman is the empty category. Woman alone seems to have "gender" since the category itself is defined as that aspect of social relations based on difference between sexes in which the standard has always been man (Lacqueur 1990:22).

Monique Wittig (1992) contends that there is, in effect, not only one gender but only one sex as well, which is female. She argues that to be male is to be the universal person whilst to be female is to be sexed. 'A woman ... only exists as a term that stabilizes and consolidates a binary and oppositional relation to a man - heterosexuality' (Butler 1990:112-3). In Wittig's opinion, the patriarchal emphasis on sexual difference exists as a means of perpetuating heterosexuality. Patriarchy is dependent upon heterosexuality and reproductive sexuality to sustain male dominance because heterosexuality binds women into primary relationships with men in which they fulfill specific, predetermined roles.

By gendering the female subject in relation to the presumed gender-neutral, generic subject, the female subject is made dependent on the male subject for meaning. While the male subject as agent can exist independently from the female subject, the female subject by virtue of being gendered exists only in relation to the male. 'Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man' (De Beauvoir 1989:xxii). This results in the definition of women in terms of their relationships to men - as wives, daughters, mothers, lovers etc.- as opposed to independent agents.

This construction of woman as gendered other to the neutral male subject results in gendered degrees of agency. Women and men are interpellated into positions of relative power/powerlessness according to gender. The different degrees of agency afforded male and female subjects respectively is effectively summed up in John Berger's statement that 'men act and women appear' (1974:46). The male subject is interpellated as independent and autonomous and is, thereby, afforded greater freedom of agency than the female subject. He is empowered to act:

[a] man's social presence is dependent upon the promise of power which he embodies....the promised power may be moral, physical, temperamental, economic, social, sexual - but its object is always exterior to the man (Berger 1974:45).

The female subject, through her dependence on the male subject for meaning, is relegated to the paradoxical position of subject-object. In the position of other/object, she is the 'person...to which action or feeling is directed' (Allen 1984:504-5). She is acted upon by the male subject. This is not to imply, however, that she is devoid of agency. On the contrary, the female subject as *subject* is afforded agency but this agency is directly and inextricably determined by her relationship to the male subject. As argued by Berger, a woman's agency 'expresses her attitude to herself, and defines what can and cannot be done to her' (1974:46). Her identity and sense of self may therefore be caught up in how she is seen by another. Consequently, she may be split into both the viewer and the viewed. She thus occupies the position of

both subject and object in relation to herself. Through a constant awareness of being looked at, and concern with how she appears to other people, she objectifies herself and perpetuates the heterosexualised, patriarchal constructs of male as active, desiring subject and female as passive, desired object. In order to avoid crass generalisation, it is essential to note that, although dominant ideology may encourage this gendered configuration of power through its interpellation of subjects, the outcome of interpellation is not guaranteed. Not all female subjects will necessarily conform to this patriarchal construction of woman as subject-object.

Butler argues that this gendered subject-object relationship is based upon the construction of binary oppositions, the most crucial of which is the 'I'/other divide. She contends that this oppositional relationship, in which the 'I' is considered to be a pre-existent entity, is 'a strategy of domination which pits the "I" against an other'(1990:144). This serves as a means of establishing the 'I' and reifying 'the opposition as a necessity whilst concealing the discursive apparatus by which the binary itself is constructed'(144). The position of the 'I' (the subject) is masculinised whilst the position of other, or the object position is held by the female subject. Within this framework, difference is productive of meaning. Thus the subject position takes its meaning from its difference to the object position. Given that subject positions are defined by their agency, the difference between subject and

object is located in the object position's relative lack of power/agency. The gendering of these positions is manifest in the grounding of difference between subject and object positions in sexual difference. Subject becomes male defined and woman is relegated to the position of object. Thus sexual difference becomes synonymous with difference in agency.

Implications of Female as Subject/ Object

By informing how individuals experience themselves within the world, and presenting these identities as natural, the gendered power imbalances which result are naturalised. Gledhill describes how 'bourgeois society misrepresent[s] class relations making the dominance of the ruling class appear natural...whereby the working class accepts inequality as part of the natural order' (1994:109), a description which can be applied to the workings of patriarchy, given the analogous relationship between gender and class oppression.

The internalised construction of the female subject as subject-object serves to reinforce patriarchal structures through the female subject's objectification of herself. Given that subjecthood (agency) is the defining characteristic of human beings within a humanist framework, and given that the female subject is denied this agency, through internalising the object position, the female subject dehumanises herself. Michelle Cliff (1992), in her discussion of certain black women artists, expresses the

sentiment that dehumanisation is the foundation of all oppression. Therefore women, through their objectification of themselves and other women, perpetuate a primary strategy of patriarchal oppression against themselves and each other.

Although oppressive gender roles are presented as the norm and deviation from these prescribed roles carries the stigma of abnormality and subsequent censure, the possibility for transgressing these gender roles does exist. In spite of the pressure of the patriarchal strategies of interpellation, interpellation as subject-object is not inevitable for all women. I will discuss transgressive female subjects towards the end of this chapter in my discussion of the performance of gender.

Patriarchal Hegemony and Common sense

For hegemony to be secured everyone must accept at the level of "common sense" knowledge, the view of the dominant class (Barrett 1980:123).

One of the primary means by which patriarchy camouflages its effects is through an appeal to 'common sense'.

'Common sense consists of a number of social meanings and the particular ways of understanding the world which guarantee them' (Weedon 1989:77). These meanings inevitably serve the interests of the dominant social groups and 'become fixed and widely accepted as true irrespective of sectional interests' (77). Common sense becomes fixed through its 'claim to be natural, obvious and therefore

true'(77). Thus the premise upon which such knowledge is based is not questioned because of the emphasis on the 'obvious' truth of what is known. Obviousness is derived from the verification provided by what is seen and experienced. Personal experience is the 'guarantee of ...truth'(78). This is dependent on liberal humanist conception of the subject as 'free, rational, [and] self-determining'(79). The rationality of the humanist subject is assumed to ensure the subject's ability to perceive reality accurately, based on empirically derived common sense. This perception of reality is dependent on knowledge, for which personal experience and common sense form the touchstones. The power of this construct lies in its masquerade as the 'truth' through appealing to human nature and common knowledge.

Personal experience, however, is ideologically influenced, in that it requires a framework in order to be intelligible. Experience itself has no inherent meaning. It is the framework through which experience is interpreted that creates meaning. Ideology, by interpellating subjects, provides the framework within which experience can be understood.

Sexual Difference and Common sense

One of the cornerstones of patriarchal power is the common sense 'reality' of sexual difference. Inequitable power relations and oppressive gender roles are naturalised

through entrenching the differences between women and men as common sense knowledge. Wittig argues that

Sex is taken as an "immediate given", "a sensible given", physical features belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an "imaginary formation" which reinterprets physical features (in themselves as neutral as others but marked by a social system), through the network of relationships in which they are perceived (1992:11-2).

She deconstructs the common sense 'categories of men and women' highlighting them as 'political categories and not natural givens' thereby asserting that sex as well as gender is a construct(105).

Epistemology, Meaning and Subjectivity

Wittig highlights the effect of epistemology on the production of meaning in terms of gender. The following example, drawn from the work of Thomas Lacqueur illustrates Wittig's argument. Anatomy would appear to be the primary means of distinguishing between the two sexes, which are regarded as fundamentally different. Anatomy, however, was also the touchstone for antiquarian and medieval doctors who, until the 18th century, understood female anatomy as an inverted version of male anatomy. Consequently, there was a one-sex model as opposed to our contemporary two-sex model, both of which were based on and verified by the body. On the basis of this example, Lacqueur states that 'The nature of sex...is the result not of biology but of our needs in speaking about it'(1990:115).

Lacqueur's work exposes the two sex model as one way of understanding sex, as opposed to a given, commonsensical fact. He highlights the influence of epistemology on the process of understanding sex. Meaning is inextricably linked to the way in which knowledge is framed. Thus the assumption of a two sex model upon which sexual difference is based needs to be considered in terms of the epistemological framework which governs the production of such meaning. Epistemology is a crucial factor in the production of meaning. The epistemological construction of knowledge thus has a crucial role to play in the individual's understanding of her experience, and consequently, in the formation of her subjectivity.

Language and Ideology

One of the crucial frameworks through which meaning is made of experience is language. Knowledge is constructed and transferred on a microcosmic level through language. Ideology constitutes the macrocosmic framework for the production of meaning. There is, therefore, necessarily a link between ideology and language. Ideology impacts on language to the extent that the very structures of language are infused with ideological and political implications. For example, for the subject to occupy a particular subject or identity position, the 'enabling conditions for the assertion of "I" ' need to be met. These conditions are 'provided by the structures of signification'(Butler 1990:143). Butler argues that the 'subject/object dichotomy...of the tradition of Western epistemology'

functions as a 'strategy of domination' and 'is naively and pervasively confirmed by the mundane operations of ordinary language'(1990:144).

Structuralist theory proposes language as a system of signs made up of signifiers and signifieds. There is no intrinsic link between the signified and the meaning ascribed to it through the signifier. On the contrary, language 'far from reflecting an already given social reality, constitutes social reality'(Weedon 1989:22). Language cannot, therefore, be viewed as a transparent vehicle for the expression of meaning. Patriarchal ideology is, however, dependent on the perception of language as a transparent vehicle for the reflection of meaning. When viewed as ideologically neutral, language serves to reflect the reality of the self/other divide, verifying sexual difference. In this way, asymmetrical gendered power relations are reinforced.

Althusser maintains that language is the vehicle through which ideology is maintained. He defines social, political, cultural, and economic institutions and practices such as the church, schools, the family, the media, theatre etc. as examples of ideological state apparatuses. According to Althusser, these ideological apparatuses are the structures used to interpellate subjects. Language, in turn, is the means by which these apparatuses are maintained. Language is, thus, the means by which subjects are interpellated. It is an ideological

tool used to control individuals in a manner which serves the interests of the dominant group.

In the following section, I shall examine how language is used to interpellate gendered subjects. In this discussion, I will draw on Jacques Lacan's (1977) psychoanalytic theory of the role of language in the formation of gendered subjectivity in conjunction with Butler (1990) and Belsey's (1980) analyses of ideology, identity and signification.

Language and Subjectivity

Jacques Lacan (1977), using Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the formation of identity, developed a theory of the role of language in the acquisition of gender and sexual identity. Lacan focuses on language as the means by which gendered subjectivity is acquired. Based on the psychosexual processes identified by Freud as the root of identity formation, Lacan argues that the imaginary structure of subjectivity is acquired through the individual's entry into 'the symbolic order of language, laws, social processes and institutions' (Weedon 1989:51). By assuming the position of a speaking subject within the symbolic order, the individual engages in an illusory self identification as subject, based on processes of misrecognition.

The first phase of this process of misrecognition is described as the mirror phase in which the child identifies

with her physical form reflected in the mirror. At this point the ego is split into the 'I' that watches and the 'I' that is watched. The illusion of unity is created through the misrecognition of self in the mirror image. This process of misrecognition of self is repeated with the individual's entry into the symbolic order through the acquisition of language. The symbolic order is described by Butler as the 'universal organizing principle of culture itself'(Butler 1990:79). It 'is the social and cultural order....structured by language and the laws and social institutions which language guarantees'(Weedon 1989:52).

When the individual enters the symbolic order through beginning to use language, a second split in the ego occurs between the ' "I" who speaks and the "I" who is represented in the discourse'(Belsey 1980:85). Belsey asserts that

[t]he work of ideology is to present the position of the subject as fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience, and to show possible action as an endless repetition of "normal", familiar action (1980:90).

This is achieved by 'suppressing the contradiction in the subject'(85). Through the suppression of this contradiction, the subject misrecognises a unity between herself and that which she speaks. Consequently, she imagines herself to be the author of meaning, in control of the language she speaks.

Butler (1990) argues that this suppression of the split in the subject is achieved through the concealment of the

signifying practices. The substantive, gendered 'I' is created through a process of signification, as opposed to existing prior to representation. Signifying practices are the means by which identity is constructed, not reflected. Butler maintains that these signifying practices seek 'to conceal [their] own workings and to naturalize [their] effects' (Butler 1990:144). By concealing the construction of identity, the patriarchal illusion of coherent, fixed, natural gender identities and differences can be sustained, along with the inequalities of status and power inherent within these identities. Butler's argument recalls Lacanian theory of the formation of subjectivity through the subject's entry into the symbolic order of language - identity as constituted through the entry into signifying practices.

Discourse Analysis: Language, Subjectivity and Power

Not all language will, however, serve the same ideological - in this case patriarchal - purpose. Foucault's (1986) theory of discourse analysis offers a useful framework for understanding the relationship between power and language and recognises the possibility of transgression in the use of language. It locates the production of meaning in the relationship between language and social power, identifying language as the site of struggle and contestation of different meanings.

Foucault situates this struggle in the existence of different discourses. Discourses are described by Weedon as

ways of constituting knowledge....Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the "nature" of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and the emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern (1989:108).

This has implications for identity as discourses extend beyond just constituting ways of knowing and seeing, to constituting ways of being. In effect, discourses construct their subjects as opposed to acting upon pre-existent entities.

Discourses operate within discursive fields. Discursive fields are constituted by different areas of political, social, economic and personal activity such as the law, political systems, the media, and the education system. These are equivalent to Althusser's ideological apparatuses. The dominant discourses within any particular discursive field tend to have strong institutional support within these ideological apparatuses. Foucault does, however, argue that every dominant discourse creates within itself the place for a counter-discourse. He cites homosexuality as an example: 'the appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species...of homosexuality...made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf'(Foucault 1981:101). Given the fact that language presents a number of discursive practices, a number of

discursive positions are presented. These often conflict with one another in competition for power. Consequently, identity is the site of conflict and change, as opposed to a fixed stable category. The subject is, thus, able to occupy discursive positions which transgress the socially prescribed gender identities.

Gender as Performance

I have argued that gender identity is constructed by ideology and is hence an ideological effect as opposed to an innate, natural component of human nature. The deconstruction of both gender and sex as natural phenomena poses questions as to how gender identity should then be understood, as well as to how the transgression of ideologically constructed gender norms can be encouraged.

The Social Performance of Gender

Butler, drawing from De Beauvoir's statement that one is not born but becomes a woman, argues that

if gender is something one becomes - but can never be - then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort (Butler 1990:112).

Based on her deconstruction of the pre-existent, substantive 'I', she asserts that

gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*....'(Butler 1990:140) [my emphasis].

Gender is, simply, a continuous performance.

This performance relies on a range of physical, behavioural and textual cues to reproduce accepted, context-specific perceptions of femininity and masculinity (Bornstein 1995:21-31). These cues may vary according to socio-historical context but, in spite of differences, they all tend to reproduce 'the myth of woman' (Wittig 1992:11). This is the patriarchal construction of the female subject as defined by her relationships to men - the female subject as subject-object. Women, as a result of the internalisation of patriarchal values, enact the subjectivity of woman as subject-object.

The enactment of gender codes suggests that subversion of patriarchal gender norms may be possible by altering the performance of gender. And, this is, indeed, what Butler proposes, to a certain extent, in her call for interventions into conventional gender codes. But, as Alisa Solomon argues, 'gender isn't merely performance....It is too simple to say that gender is *all* role-playing' (Solomon 1993:38). Butler writes that 'gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is *performative* in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express (1993:314-5) [Butler's emphasis]. It is therefore 'only within the practice of repetitive signification that a subversion of identity becomes possible' (Butler 1990:145).

An example of the subversion of gender identity is found in the lesbian subject. It is important to note that she is,

by no means, the only female subject capable of transgressing social gender codes. According to Wittig (1992) the lesbian, by virtue of her position outside a heterosexual paradigm of male-female desire is 'a not-woman' because 'woman' is defined as such by her relationship to man. Her desire for women places her in the position of subject associated with man and yet, she is not a man. The lesbian is, thus, neither man nor woman. As 'a not-woman, a not-man' (Wittig 1992:13), the lesbian challenges the binary, heterosexualised construction of patriarchal gender roles.

An example of the subversive potential of the lesbian subject is especially evident in the lesbian roles of butch-femme. Solomon argues that
 butches threaten masculinity more than they imitate it....Rather than copying masculinity, butches point to the embarrassing fact that there is no such thing (1993:37).

By assuming characteristics and cues generally associated with men, the butch lesbian highlights the arbitrary gender assignment of these cues. This not only exposes the construction of purportedly natural gender roles, behaviour, codes and so forth, but also points to the possibility of self-determination. The butch subject presents the possibility of occupying different discursive positions. Identity is shown as a site of difference, contradictions and multiple positions as opposed to a fixed, unified, predetermined entity.

The Theatrical Performance of Gender

The butch subject challenges the patriarchal gender structures through her transgressive performance of traditionally masculine gender codes. She exposes the signifying practices of gender. In the same way, the cultural practice of theatre 'by its very nature, can investigate and undo convention of representation' (Solomon 1993:146). Theatre, in its use of the human body as its primary means of signification and in the immediacy of its live performance, appears to me to be an ideal site for the subversion of gender codes. It is the site of deliberate reproduction of human behaviours and, as such, may function to highlight the social performance of gender extremely well.

Within the Althusserian model, theatre is a cultural apparatus and may serve as a vehicle for the interpellation of subjects in accordance with patriarchal ideology. In order to establish how theatre might be used to expose and subvert this process of interpellation, it is necessary to examine the influence of patriarchal ideology on the discursive field of theatre, and the ways in which the cultural apparatus of theatre interpellates gendered subjects. Thus in Chapter Two, I shall explore the relationship between theatrical practice and patriarchal ideology.

CHAPTER TWO

PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY AND THEATRICAL DISCOURSE: THE INTERPELLATION OF GENDERED SUBJECTS THROUGH DOMINANT FORMS OF THEATRE

Cultural Production: (Re)presentation and Ideology

In Chapter One, I argued that patriarchal ideology reproduces inequitable gender power relations through the interpellation of gendered subjects. Drawing from the Lacanian model of the formation of gendered subjectivity as well as the work of Butler (1990), Belsey (1980) and Althusser (1979), I identified the crucial role of signification in this interpellation of subjects. The importance of signifying practices in the construction of subjects suggests that cultural and communication apparatuses, which involve signification and communication, 'provide an important site for the construction of ideological processes' (Barrett 1985:91) and hence for the interpellation of subjects. Cultural production, which includes amongst other discursive fields the diverse cultural practices of television, print media, film, visual arts, literature and theatre, utilises different systems of signification to produce meaning through (re)presentation.

(Re)presentation is a vital process by means of which meaning is made of human experience. This suggests a

parallel between subjectivity and cultural practice: although different cultural practices produce representations from different mediums of signification, all representation constructs and communicates a version of reality. As with all systems of communication, representation is dependent on the presence of a recipient/reader/spectator to whom this version of reality can be communicated. Representation 'is something that only exists when there is someone to receive meaning as well as someone producing it'(Allen 1992:28). Thus (re)presentation intersects with social subjects who are the recipients of the particular version of reality re-presented. The social subject is placed in relation to the reality presented. Through this relationship between the social subject and the representation, meaning is created. This meaning, in turn, both informs and is informed by the individual's subjectivity. Thus '[l]anguage and cultural forms are sites in which different subjectivities struggle to impose or challenge, to confirm, negotiate, or displace, definitions and identities'(Gledhill 1992:199).

Multiple Subject Positions in Theatrical Representation

Different cultural practices produce different kinds of representations, using different media. I would suggest that theatrical representation is a particularly effective tool for informing subjectivity. Unlike literature, for example, where representation occurs through written language, theatre uses the live human body as its primary medium of communication. It differs even from television

and film which also rely heavily on images of the human body, in the immediacy of its live performance.

In order to understand how theatrical representation interpellates subjects, I shall examine the intersection of the theatrical text with the social subject in this chapter. This will necessitate identifying the key subject positions and processes involved in the production and reception of theatrical representation. I will, therefore, outline the key concepts and terms I will be using to refer to and explain these subjects positions and processes in my discussion of theatrical representation.

In the process of theatrical representation, production and reception are the rehearsal and performance phases respectively. Unlike art, or literature which can be produced and received by isolated individuals, theatre invariably requires the interaction of a number of people, both in the production and reception of it. Theatre is an extremely social form of representation. This stems back to the presumed origins of theatre as religious ceremony or ritual where the communal creation and experience of the event was of the utmost significance in making meaning of a community's experiences.

The crucial position of the producer of the theatrical representation is not, therefore, the domain of a single artist/agent. This subject position, which I shall hence forth refer to as the *speaking subject* (Silverman 1988) 'is

equated with the power to produce'(Clement 1993:55) and is, therefore, likely to be shared by the various people involved in the creation of the theatrical representation. These may include the director, designer, producer, playwright and performers depending on the working method of the particular production.

The rehearsal phase will produce the performance text. The key position of agency in the performance text is the *subject of speech* (Silverman 1988). In theatrical terms, the subject of speech is the protagonist of the drama. She or he is 'the discursive marker'(Silverman 1988:200) through which the *spoken subject* is enunciated during the performance phase of theatrical representation. The spoken subject or *textual subject* is the textual position created by the text. It is the position from which the text is most comfortably and intelligibly viewed. The spectator is, hence, encouraged to adopt this position in spite of possible discrepancies between her position/identity as a social subject and that of the textual subject. The spoken subject is the spectator who receives, and is interpellated by the text.

The Interpellation of Subjects through the Discourse of Theatre

In Chapter One, I argued that the formation of gendered subjectivity is an ideological effect. I established that patriarchal ideology achieves this effect through suppressing the split between the ' "I" who speaks and the

"I" who is represented in the discourse'(Belsey 1980:85) that occurs when the subject enters the symbolic order. Thus ideology reproduces the 'mechanisms of the [Lacanian] mirror phase and psycho-sexual development'(Weedon 1989:52).

I am interested in how the discourse of theatre is used to reproduce the 'imaginary structure of subjectivity'(Weedon 1989:51). This chapter will, therefore, focus on *how* the cultural/communication apparatus of theatre reproduces this ideological effect of the unified, fixed and gendered subject, thereby 'enabl[ing] the forces of [patriarchal] oppression'(Sullivan 1994:11).

The Lacanian Mirror

Theatre is a system of signification in which 'human beings are both the content and form'(Wilson 1976:97-9).

It is, thus, as a result of its use of the human body as sign, an ideal medium for reproducing a subject's misrecognition of self in the signification systems of the symbolic order. Live performance is significant in its impact on the way in which theatre is able to interpellate subjects. In terms of Lacan's mirror phase of identification, the use of human beings as the predominant signs within theatrical representation increases the potential for the spectator to identify herself with the subject of the drama.

The interpellation of subjects through theatre is dependent on the theatrical frame acting as the Lacanian mirror. In order for the split in the subject to be suppressed, the process of theatrical representation needs to mirror the Lacanian phases of identification whereby the split in the subject is both created and concealed. The spectator needs to mistakenly recognise a 'reflection' of herself in the fictional world of the play. She will be reflected/enunciated by the actor/character protagonist within this frame. In mistakenly recognising a reflection of self in the protagonist or subject of speech, the spectator is 'spoken' by the performance text. She becomes the spoken subject. The spoken subject's misrecognition of self in the subject of speech is dependent on her identification with the protagonist. The performance text, thus, needs to encourage this relationship of identification between its protagonist and the spectator.

Creating and sustaining a relationship of identification between the spoken subject and subject of speech, may require that the illusion of theatre as a mirror be sustained. Thus, the fictional world should appear, as far as possible, to be a reflection of reality as opposed to a construction of it. In effect, the theatrical medium needs to appear as a neutral mirror reflecting a pre-existent reality. This necessitates concealing semiotic processes of theatrical representation.

By concealing the workings of theatrical signification, theatre's ideological effects can be naturalized. The illusion of theatrical representation as a reflection of reality hides the ideological workings of dominant theatrical discourse, by means of which subjects 'freely accept their subjectivity and their subjection' (Belsey 1980:69). The illusion of the spectator as the rational, independent subject who 'is invited to perceive and judge the "truth" of the text' (Belsey 1980:68) based on her rational common sense is perpetuated. The subject is made to appear independent of the representation and the meaning it supposedly reflects.

The Ideal Spectator

Every performance text (referred to hereafter as the text), however, constructs an 'ideal spectator at the point of its address' (Dolan 1988:13). This will be the position from which the performance will be most comfortably and intelligibly viewed. This is the subject who is spoken by the text. Given that 'the addressees of any cultural product are often gender and race [class, age, culture...] specific, ...points of entry into reception are thus limited' by the ideological axes of power underpinning the representation (Bennet 1990:90). More often than not, these will be consistent with hegemonic values. The spoken or textual subject (Gledhill 1992) - the subject constructed at the point of the text's address - will reflect these values.

Consequently, not all theatre spectators are positioned similarly. '[T]he [spectator]/subject is empowered to act according to the identity prescribed by the discourse' of theatre (Himmelweit 1992:236). Therefore, only social subjects who approximate the criteria of the ideal spectator are likely to be empowered by the text. These spectators will be the most comfortable and will have their position of power, albeit an illusion produced by the hidden ideology, reinforced.

By occupying the discursive position from which the text is most intelligible, the ideal spectator is empowered with the illusory power of both the subject of speech and the speaking subject. In identifying herself with the subject of the drama, the spectator mistakenly imagines herself to be the subject of speech. Simultaneously, she also identifies herself with the power of the speaking subject by virtue of her looking through the eyes of the subject of speech as well as having the power to *look at* and objectify the other characters.

Spectators who do not meet the criteria of the textual subject are positioned less comfortably. They are either coerced by the performance text to approximate the identity of the ideal spectator through identifying with the position of the subject of speech and the speaking subject or are excluded from the text's address. This exclusion means exclusion from the positions of agency offered by the text. Access to agency, however, may require this

spectator to participate in her own objectification or marginalisation. A useful example of this process is described by Augusto Boal, in Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). He recounts how Mexican children 'abandon their own universe' through identifying with the cowboys, even when watching 'the Mexicans being knocked while defending their land'(114). Thus, through the construction of a subject consistent with dominant ideology at the point of a text's address, hegemonic values and identities may be reinforced.

The Potential for Transgression

This is not to imply, however, that the outcome of this process of the interpellation of subjects is guaranteed. The intersection of the social subject with the textual subject will not necessarily result in the spectator's conformity to the subjectivity prescribed by the ideology of the text. On the contrary, it is possible that the spectator's position as a gendered social subject may result in a subversive interpretation of the text, particularly when the spectator transgresses the expectations of social gender performance. It is these points of fracture which open up the possibility for transgression that I am interested in. I will, therefore, discuss the potential for gender subversive readings of theatrical texts more fully in Chapter Five as well as exploring strategies for producing gender-subversive theatre in Chapters Three and Four.

The Social and Theatrical Performance of Gender

Following Butler's theory that 'women learn to act or play their allocated part within social experience', Tait argues that

Butler points the way to seeing how theatre metaphorically reflects and reinforces this process of learning and staging the act of gender....To repeat action and gestures of feminine behaviours becomes the characterising and performing of a gendered self (1994:43-44).

Theatre is often the 'site of the deliberate reproduction of physical behaviours, including the enactment of gender identity'(Tait 1996:43). Dominant forms of theatre tend to reproduce patriarchal gender codes whilst camouflaging their reproduction. They may, therefore, serve as an extremely effective tool for reinforcing these gender codes as natural.

The Spectator-Text Relationship

The spectator-(performance) text relationship is the immediate tool whereby the patriarchal interpellation of subjects is effected. It is, therefore, crucial to examine how this relationship is exploited to patriarchal ends. But the spectator-text relationship is itself the product of a complex network of relationships. The collective production and reception of theatre means that there are multiple relationships involved in the ultimate positioning and hence, interpellation of the spectator by the text. These relationships extend from the microcosmic level of the specifics of the text to the macrocosmic level of the relationship between text, cultural institution and social, political and economic context. In order to understand the

workings of patriarchy through the spectator-text relationship, it is important to identify the key relationships in this network and how they influence the gendering of the spectator-text relationship. Gledhill (1992) identifies a three tier set of relationships which encapsulate the chain of ideological influence described above. She argues that the relationship between ideology and the subject is dependent on three key relationships: ideology-institution, institution-text and text-spectator.

The Institution-Text Relationship

As I have already briefly mentioned, the speaking subject 'is equated with the power to produce' (Clement 1993:55). Thus the agency of this position can be defined as the power to determine what is represented. Pinpointing who holds this power in theatrical representation is a difficult task. Unlike film, where the speaking subject is defined as the look of the camera, theatre has no unifying gaze. In cinema, the filming and editing processes allows for extensive manipulation of the final images. The temporal, ephemeral nature of theatrical performance does not allow for the same extent of control. The theatrical performance is never fixed and no two performances can ever be exactly the same. Live performance means that the production is recreated each time it is performed and can be subject to unexpected influences. These may include audience responses, mistakes by performers or crew, even power failures etc. Thus the speaking subject of theatre, although a powerful agent, can never entirely control what

is seen and consequently, cannot completely determine the relationship between the spectator and the performance.

In addition, the power of the speaking subject is not generally invested in any one person because what is seen is not only controlled by those making the artistic *how* decisions about the product such as the director, designer, playwright and so on. What is finally presented is also controlled by those who determine *what* is to be performed, by whom, for whom and with what resources. The speaking subject thus includes both the artistic and logistic aspects of production. While in film these combine to form the look of the camera (Mulvey 1977), they cannot be as neatly drawn together in theatre.

Both the artistic and logistic aspects of production will be influenced by the institutional context in which they occur. By institutional context, I refer to the cultural institutions which produce theatre. These may take a variety of different forms such as state funded arts organisations, which in South Africa used to be the performing arts councils, university drama/theatre departments, commercial theatres, community theatre organisations or independent theatre companies. The practice of each institution in terms of what kind of work is produced, by whom, for whom, along with how the institution itself is organised and run will be determined by the ideology of the institution. This ideology may or may not be openly acknowledged but it will inhere in all

aspects of the cultural institution from the theatrical representations it produces to its administrative structures.

The Ideology-Institution Relationship

While each institution may embrace a particular ideology, no institution can function independently of its socio-historical, political context. 'Ideology ...is inscribed in specific discourses' and all discourses as 'particular way(s) of talking, and writing and thinking'(Belsey 1980:5) are enmeshed in their social, political, economic contexts. Consequently, every cultural institution will be positioned in relation to the dominant ideology of its particular socio-historical context and will be influenced by its relationship to the dominant ideology. Institutions which support dominant ideology are likely to be the dominant cultural institutions within their context while institutions promoting a counter ideology are unlikely to have the same access to resources, infrastructures and so forth.

An extreme example which illustrates this point effectively is the contrast between the South African performing arts councils during the 1970's and 80's and the protest theatre of the same period. The performing arts councils, established during the height of apartheid rule in South Africa as vehicles for the promotion of white South African culture, were completely state subsidised and were housed in elaborate theatre complexes. In contrast, the protest

theatre of the 70's and 80's not only had no access to state resources, but was beset with opposition from the apartheid government in the form of censorship laws, legislation against racially mixed audiences and casts, police harassment and so forth. Thus the vastly different relationships of the performing arts councils and protest theatre to the Apartheid ideology are manifest in tangible ways.

The Impact of Patriarchal Ideology on Cultural Institutions

The cultural apparatus of theatre like that of TV, film, and other cultural practices, functions within a broader network of social, economic and political power relations. By virtue of this, the institutions which produce the cultural practice of theatre are very likely to be controlled by power structures which support patriarchal ideology. Within a socio-historical, political context in which patriarchy forms part of the hegemonic ideology, as is the case in contemporary South Africa, dominant cultural institutions are primarily male controlled. Citing South African examples of this is complicated. South African cultural institutions are in upheaval due to the massive political transformations which have precipitated a cut in arts subsidies, and a reorientation of funds away from the Eurocentric performing arts councils into more community based work. In spite of this crisis in the arts, however, it is still possible to argue that theatre practice in South Africa remains male dominated.

The male domination of cultural institutions tends to result in male written, male directed work. The long tradition of male domination of the arts, including theatre, has left its legacy in the almost exclusively male canon of dramatic literature. Even the more contemporary additions such as the plays of Berkoff, Beckett and Dorfman are male written. The evolution of a South African canon of theatre texts reflects the same gender bias as the protest plays of Fugard, Ngema, Maponye, Mda are assimilated into the mainstream of South African theatre practice. Work that was formerly part of 'alternative' theatre such as Woza Albert and Bopha! has become incorporated into the South African canon. This reflects a significant attempt, although by no means complete, to make the cultural apparatuses of South African theatre more multi-cultural and multi-racial, in keeping with the new democracy. There has been an effort to address the hegemony of racist, Eurocentric cultural practices. Gender is, however, one axis of domination that has not been addressed in spite of the emphasis on gender and women's rights in the new bill of rights. Patriarchal hegemonic practice continues, and in contrast to racism, there is no coherent tradition of theatre opposing this gender bias.

The absence of a tradition of feminist theatre practice in South Africa can, in part, be accounted for by the struggle for women's rights in South Africa being subsumed for years by the struggle against Apartheid. I do not think, however, that the absence of feminist theatre in South

Africa is that simply explained. For if it were, the dismantling of apartheid would have created the space for women to start making theatre specifically about political concerns, which has not occurred. I contend that two primary factors are at play in the absence of feminist theatre in South Africa. A brief look at the emergence of gay male theatre in post-apartheid South African theatre helps to highlight these factors.

Gay male theatre has developed extensively in the post-apartheid years of South African theatre. Since 1990, March of the Falsettos and Falsettoland have been performed in two separate runs; The Homosexuals Out in Africa was performed country wide between 1992/1993; Get Hard was the hit of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 1994 and subsequently had a nationwide tour; the Playhouse Company produced Faces in the Wall in 1994 and Capab has had a hit with the gay musical Boy Meets Boy. Also in Cape Town recently were the productions of Raw Dog Night and The Stories I could Tell which was performed at a theatre festival in Australia. The sheer volume of work produced is indicative of the fact that gay theatre has claimed a space for itself in the post-apartheid landscape of South African theatre.

Although a substantial number of these productions were created outside the mainstream cultural institutions, an equally large proportion of them were supported by the state funded arts councils. This points to the political/

ideological framework which underpins the organisation of South African society in terms of human and economic resources. Cultural institutions such as the performing arts councils have continued under predominantly male management and while it is not appropriate to generalise about the sexual orientation of these male managers, the high proportion of gay men generally found in artistic careers may account for the sympathetic reception of gay material by these organisations. The absence of substantial representation of women in positions where they can gain access to financial and other resources easily, has certainly impacted on the absence of South African feminist theatre. In my own experience of attempting to make lesbian, feminist theatre, access to resources was a critical issue.

Although the practical issues of money, access to rehearsal and performance space, publicity etc. have a very definite impact on the work that is (or isn't created), the absence of feminist theatre in South Africa is a more complex matter. Kemp, Madlala, Moodley and Sala (1995) discuss how women's experiences in South Africa have been and continue to be vastly different. The factors of race, class, culture and language all intersect with gender. It cannot therefore be said that women in South Africa share a common oppression. Their experience of gender oppressions may take very different forms and, hence, require very different responses. The organisation of power, both political and economic, along racial lines has divided women. In many

respects, white women have been the direct source of oppression for black women.

Over and above this, however, is a more fundamental issue pertaining to the way in which patriarchal, heterosexist ideology functions. The explicit nature of apartheid's racist ideology created a tangible point for resistance, allowing for the development, in Foucauldian terms, of a strong counter-discourse. The implicit and naturalised form of gender oppression makes it difficult to formulate resistance. This relates to the patriarchal reliance on naturalising women's place within a heterosexual order. Through perpetuating the naturalness of heterosexual relations between men and women, women are kept in a *unique* relationship to their oppressor, a relationship which dominant theatre practices serve to reinforce.

Gendered Subject Positions in Theatrical Discourse

The Gendered Speaking Subject

The hegemonic control of cultural institutions often means that one 'social group has the power to represent another group, [with the result] that these representations serve their own interests rather than those of the group represented' (Marshment 1994:126). The control of the production of representations is the power to decide who is represented, how and for whom. Consequently, many groups of people who exist beyond the parameters of mainstream ideology are under-represented, if they are represented at

all. In South Africa, for example, up until recently English and Afrikaans were the primary broadcasting languages of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Hence English and Afrikaans cultural groups were represented far more than the other language and cultural groups of South Africa's multi-cultural society.

The hegemony of patriarchy has given men the power to represent women, the effects of which are blatantly obvious in the 'ugly images of women offering up distorted bodies for whatever fantasy passes in the name of male art' (Lorde 1996:5). We encounter these misogynistic representations of women on a daily basis in magazines, television, film, theatre etc. Women, by comparison with many other marginalised or oppressed groups are over represented in highly specific ways. As frustrating and nauseating as these 'gargoyles of pleasure' (Lorde 1996:5) may be, the overwhelming abundance of these images is indicative of patriarchy's dependence on the 'myth of woman' (Wittig 1992) as a means of sustaining male privilege.

The Universalised Male Subject and Woman as Other

Male privilege is reinforced through dominant theatrical discourse through a seemingly paradoxical two pronged strategy. The broader societal universalisation of the masculine subject, which I discussed in Chapter One, is repeated within the theatrical paradigm. Western theatre has a long tradition of universalising male experience. This is effected through the representation of fictional

worlds in which male experience and male perspectives are foregrounded without being acknowledged as expressly male. On the contrary, '[a]ll conceal the masculine point of view and the partiality of the account'(Allen 1992:28). Consequently, the male subject of speech is presented as a genderless representation of all humanity : 'the specificity of the "masculine" becomes in some way culturally universalised'(Kuhn 1982:64). The paradox arises, however, out of the dependence on the presence of a gendered other to reaffirm male power and privilege.

The Gendered Subject of Speech

Dominant theatrical discourse reproduces the subject-object construction of the female subject that I discussed in Chapter One. The female subject's dependence on her relationship to the male for meaning is reinforced through theatrical representation. Thus 'woman', when she is not entirely absent, is often constructed in theatrical representations as 'an object of desire rather than the subject of action'(Clement 1994:58). Women are invariably portrayed primarily as sexual objects to be pursued and possessed by the male subjects. They are not present for their own purposes but for the gratification of male desire.

In cases where women are not presented as sexual objects for the satiation of male lusts, often because they do not conform to current conventions of feminine charms, they still tend to be represented as gratifying male needs and

wants. Linda, Willy Loman's wife in Miller's Death of a Salesman, for example, epitomizes this stereotype of the patient, long suffering, loyal, slave-to-male-needs mother/nurturer/wife woman. Linda has no life outside her all-consuming devotion to Willy. She presents the figure of the woman who willingly and lovingly commits her life to the service and care of her man.

Where women do not fulfil either of these roles of sex object or care-giver, they are most often represented as deviants, perverts or lunatics. Lady Macbeth is an example: her murderous intent is often represented as far more culpable than the bloody deeds of her husband because she is a woman. Like Eve in the myth of Eden, Lady Macbeth is constructed as the primary initiator of evil, beguiling her hapless husband into horrific actions. These are the representations of women who do not conform to male prescriptions of woman. These female characters tend to be presented as obstacles to be overcome by the male subject (protagonist) and are often rewarded for their waywardness with punishment and death, as exemplified in Clytemnestra's murder at the hands of her son Orestes.

In

Lacanian analysis, and its apt application to representational processes, women are given no opportunity to achieve subjectivity, because they are merely defined as "other" than the male referent (phallus) (Dolan 1988:13).

This results in 'the contradiction of the female subject: while she struggles to be named the producer of meaning,

she finds herself enmeshed in a system dependent on her object status'(Clement 1994:65).

The Significance of Gendered Character-Character Relationships

The relationships between characters within the fictional world of the play are particularly significant because the spectator will experience the fictional events from the protagonist's perspective, and will also view the other characters through the protagonist's eyes. Laura Mulvey (1977) describes this subject position as the look of the characters to one another. Where the protagonist has the right to look at the other characters, the spectator is given that right too. The looking often constitutes the right of access to the *object* being subjected to the controlling gaze. Thus looking becomes a means of objectifying and thereby dehumanising certain characters depending on how the look of the protagonist is constructed.

The Gendered Spoken Subject

By virtue of the tendency to have male protagonists through whose eyes the action is seen, the ideal spectator is generally constructed as male. This results in gendered 'differences between spectators positioned in front of the representational frame'(Dolan 1988:2). Although I am primarily concerned with the construction of gender identity, I acknowledge that gender forms only one axis of power and is one aspect of the construction of the ideal

spectator. Other aspects of identity such as race, class and culture constitute other axes of discrimination. Consequently, gender functions as a part of a complex matrix of power relations in theatrical production and reception.

Through having the right of access to female characters through the agency of the male protagonist, the male spectator is empowered to possess through looking. The power of the spectator to look when invested in a masculine subject manifests itself as a form of possession/right of access to the female 'objects' represented in the fictional world of the drama. The masculine subject has the right to look at the female performers. The female subject is the passive recipient of the active male gaze. This relationship is grounded in the heterosexual paradigm of female passivity and male aggression where the male has a right to possess the female. Angela Partington describes how the power to look becomes gendered: 'if a woman looks, she is masculinised, if a man is the object of the gaze, he is feminized because both are "trapped" within a logic that aligns sexual difference within a subject/object dichotomy' (1991:53). The reproduction of this relationship in theatrical representation empowers the male spectator by reaffirming male privilege and producing pleasure.

Spectatorship and Pleasure

Mulvey (1977) argues that classic narrative cinema mimics the Lacanian identification process by which the child

enters the symbolic order of patriarchal language. Through the processes of scopophilic voyeurism, which is the pleasure derived from subjecting others to the controlling look, and scopophilic narcissism which produces the pleasure of identifying self with other, the male spectator identifies with the active male protagonist. This recreates the ego ideal of the Lacanian mirror phase. The male spectator's identification with the active male protagonist is crucial as it 'allows him a point of entry into the film's address and allows the representation to replicate the process of sexual differentiation in the meanings it delivers'(Dolan 1988:13).

The female spectator, on the other hand, is the 'passive, invisible, unspoken subject'(Dolan 1988:2). She has the uncomfortable options of identifying with the women within the drama who are likely to have been 'acting passively before the specter of male authority', or 'participating in the play's narrative from the hero's point of view'(Dolan 1988:2). In either option, the female spectator becomes in some way 'complicit in the objectification or erasure of her gender class'(2). The female spectator is pressurised to assume the masculine subject position in order to be able to assume a spectator role at all. The assumption of a masculine subject position, however, requires her to participate in the objectification of women. In doing so, she reinforces the patriarchal construction of woman as object to be looked at, and ultimately contributes to her own disempowerment.

The female spectator is thus potentially denied subjectivity or agency as a woman. Her access to agency or to the position of the spoken subject is dependent on her assumption of generic masculinity. Through this means, the universalisation of masculine experience is perpetuated together with the replication of sexual differentiation.

Although dominant theatrical discourse 'simultaneously produce[s] woman as object of male desire and invite[s] the female audience to consume'(Gledhill 1994:110), these objectified images of women and the female spectator's complicity with the discourse is not automatic. It is possible for a spectator to resist interpellation. The unspoken subject is not necessarily devoid of power. Nor do all theatrical performance texts subscribe to dominant theatrical discourse. The potential for a resistant theatre spectator points to the need to ask questions around how theatre practitioners can create theatrical texts which encourage resistant, gender-subversive readings, and what such theatrical texts entail.

The feminist project of challenging the dominant discourse of theatre is not a matter of simply replacing negative images of women with positive ones as the feminists of the 1960's and early 1970's attempted to do (Gledhill 1994). Nor is it sufficient to substitute women for men in positions of power. To do this alone would be to ignore the extent to which 'bourgeois and patriarchal ideology is

embedded in the *forms* of representation itself'(Gledhill 1994:112) [my emphasis]. The objectification and subsequent disempowerment of women is entrenched within our cultural practices.

In order to create gender-subversive theatrical texts and to encourage gender-subversive readings of texts, strategies for challenging patriarchal ideology, implicit within much theatre practice, need to be developed. In Chapter Three, I shall identify the ways in which patriarchal ideology functions through theatrical structures in an attempt to develop a means of creating gender-subversive performance texts.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGIES FOR A GENDER SUBVERSIVE THEATRICAL DISCOURSE

Challenging the Patriarchal Discourse of Theatre

In Chapter Two, I established that gendered subjects are interpellated in accordance with patriarchal ideology through dominant theatre practice. In the hegemonic, conservative discourse of theatre, the illusion of fixed, stable and natural gender identities is maintained by the suppression of the Lacanian split in the subject in theatrical representational processes. In conjunction with this ideological effect, women are generally denied access to the key positions of agency within these representational processes. The subject positions of director/producer, protagonist and spectator tend to be constructed as male, thus reinforcing the naturalised, patriarchal construction of woman as passive object to the active male subject.

The focus of this chapter is on how gender-subversive theatrical performance texts can be created to encourage gender subversion with the social performance of gender.

Loren Kruger, quoted by Lizbeth Goodman (1993) writes that

there is a saying that women have always made spectacles of themselves. However, it has been only recently, and intermittently, that women have made spectacles themselves. On this difference

turns the ambiguous identity of a feminist theatre (1993:14-5).

The starting point for combating patriarchal ideology in theatre practice is with women 'making spectacles themselves' - women need to assume the positions of makers, protagonists and spectators within theatrical discourse that have been conventionally reserved for men.

I do not, however, wish to imply that the substitution of female subjects for male ones is sufficient to subvert the patriarchy of dominant theatre practice. 'The power of ideology lies in the fact that it operates not just as ideas in the head, but in the cultural assumptions that shape the way we do things'(Gledhill 1994:113).

Patriarchal ideology is embedded in theatre practice to the extent that the marginalisation and objectification of women are implicit within the very forms and structures of theatre. For instance, the illusion of gender neutrality in male dominated theatre creates an immediate problem for female theatre practitioners who assume the position of speaking subject as director, producer, or playwright in theatrical practice. In doing so, they can exercise a certain degree of decision making power with regards to the production of theatrical representations. While there are female producers, directors and playwrights in South African theatre, there are very few who foreground their identity as women. Their gender is an incidental and irrelevant fact. Consequently, the patriarchal myth of theatre practice as gender neutral is perpetuated.

On the other hand, work made by women, about women, for women is likely to be a priori gendered. In these cases, women assume the positions of speaking subject, subject of speech and spoken subject within theatrical discourse, foregrounding the importance of their gender in their agency. This, however, runs the risk of perpetuating the marginalisation of women through being labelled and written off as 'women's' theatre. Ironically, this has the same ideological effect as in the case of women who do not acknowledge their gender as politically significant to their work. Theatre which addresses women's issues is constructed as an other to gender neutral mainstream theatre. Thus the foregrounding of one's gender identity can result in 'ghettoisation'. It is not, therefore, a solution only to replace male subjects with female ones. It is, rather, one strategy among many for addressing the conservative discourse of theatre from which many different and contradictory directions can be followed.

Defining Feminist Theatres

Kruger (Goodman 1993) alludes to the multiple directions which feminist theatre practitioners can take in theatre when she refers to the 'ambiguous identity of a feminist theatre' (14-5). There is by no means a single, comprehensive definition of feminist theatre, and it is certainly inaccurate to define all theatre in which women assume positions of agency as directors or protagonists within the dramas as feminist. In Chapter One, I referred briefly to the existence of multiple schools of feminism,

mentioning that each is informed by a particular understanding/philosophy of gender identity, which, in turn, informs their different political and social agendas.

Feminist theatre performances reflect this diversity in the multitude of approaches to addressing gender/ women's/ feminist issues through theatre. These vary in terms of their objectives, the theatrical form and content used and in terms of the ideological framework underpinning the work. It is not possible, therefore, to lump all performance that addresses gender into a general category of 'feminist theatre'. There are significant differences between 'women's theatre' and 'feminist theatre' and between feminist performance texts which subscribe to different schools of feminist thought.

I stress the multiple approaches to gender through theatre and debates around definition for two reasons primarily. Firstly, I believe that significant differences between the various approaches are undercut by being clumped together. The indiscriminate grouping of all theatre productions that attempt to address gender in some way under one label functions as a strategy of marginalisation. Works which are extremely different in structure, objective, content, form, style etc. are grouped together into a general category of other. In order to resist this marginalisation, it is important to acknowledge the differences between the various approaches.

The second motivation for this discussion is a desire to be very specific about the particular approach to making gender transgressive theatre which I propose in this dissertation. I do not wish to be misinterpreted as prescribing the form that feminist theatres should take. On the contrary, the material which follows is one strategy for challenging patriarchy in and through theatre and I acknowledge its specificity to the understanding of gender as performative. For the reasons given above, I prefer to refer to the form which I propose as 'gender-subversive' rather than 'feminist', in order to avoid the debates around what constitutes feminist theatre.

Gender Subversive Theatre

Butler (1990) argues, as I discussed in Chapter One that gender is an ideological performance. The task of gender subversive theatre is, thus, to fracture the patriarchal illusion of natural gender identities by exposing gender as performative. By highlighting the *social performance* of gender through theatrical representation, the status of the oppressive gender roles and power relations of patriarchy as a natural order can be challenged and the transgression of gender norms encouraged.

A key facet of gender-subversive theatre is hence the assumption of positions as makers of theatre in order that gender transgressive texts might be produced. There are, however, problems associated with female agency, both within the representational frame as protagonists and

performers as well as outside of it as directors/makers and as spectators. I have touched on some of these problems very briefly in the preceding sections. The challenge of gender-subversive theatre is to assert the significance of gendered subjectivity, in both theatrical production and reception, without reproducing the binary gender paradigm of patriarchy and its associated power relations.

Given the importance of signification and representation in the construction of gender identity and in maintaining the illusion of its truth and stability, it stands to reason that the self-same signifying practices can be equally valuable in disrupting gender norms. Theatre is arguably an ideal medium through which to address the construction of gendered differences and their implications for the lived social relations of gendered subjects because '[e]xperiences of performance have the capacity to reveal how the making of gender identity is socially prescribed' (Tait 1994:43).

This capacity rests in the analogous relationship between the social performance of identity and theatrical performance. In social contexts, as in theatre, 'the performativity of identity can only be realised with someone in the role of audience/spectator during the enactment' (Tait 1994:43-44). The enactment, in order for it to be intelligible to its audience, needs to 'fit into forms which are recognisable to groups of spectators' (44). Thus, the social performance of 'action and gestures of

feminine behaviours'(43) requires that these actions and gestures conform to codes which are intelligible to the spectators. A similar process is reflected in theatre whereby recognisable codes and forms are used. Theatre consciously reproduces the processes whereby identity is performed socially.

Butler (1990) argues that gender identities are maintained through the repetition of culturally and context specific gender behavioural codes or cues (Bornstein 1995:21-31). While it is not possible to escape the social systems of signification/cues which constitute subjectivity, Butler proposes that interventions be made into the repetition of these gender cues as a means of subverting the patriarchal constructions of gender. Given that 'human concerns constitute the subject matter of drama, and that theatre is performed by human agents'(Aston 1991:34), the tactile, live human body is foregrounded in theatre which 'offers a unique mode of expression for re-evaluating the gendered nature of bodies constituted by social experience' (Tait 1994:4) and for making interventions into the repetition of gender codes. Butler (1990) argues that

the repetition of actions in a theatrical context allows for the choreographing of different actions and the possibility of halting the action. Actions provide the interface between what is seen (exteriority) and what is governed by belief (interiority) (Tait 1994:43).

The Interrogative Theatrical Text

Catherine Belsey, in her writing on literature, argues that the possibility for exposing the ideological construction of identity lies in 'the contradiction of the subject - between the conscious self, which is conscious in so far as it is able to feature in discourse and the self which is only partially represented there'(1980:85). Drawing Belsey's argument together with Butler's, intervention into patriarchal gender codes should, therefore, aim to expose the 'contradiction of the subject'. By exposing the split in the subject that conservative theatrical discourse seeks to conceal, the patriarchal 'illusion of unity, plenitude and identity'(Gledhill 1992:193) will be disrupted.

Belsey (1980), drawing on Benveniste's definition of three different functions of discourse in language, argues for three correlated types of texts. Of these three, she describes the text which exposes the split in the subject as the 'interrogative' text. Although Belsey is working within the discursive field of literature, the concept and characteristics of the interrogative text can be usefully appropriated and applied to theatre. Belsey's own discussion, in fact, makes the explicit connection between literary and theatrical texts in her extensive references to the work of theatre theorist and practitioner, Bertolt Brecht.

I intend, therefore, to consider the characteristics of Belsey's 'interrogative text' with a view to exploring how

they might be realised in theatre. There are three primary characteristics of the interrogative text:

1. It 'disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with the unified subject of enunciation' (Belsey 1980:91), which, in theatrical terms implies that the text should maintain a distance between the spectator and the protagonist. Althusser (1971) describes this as an ' "internal distance" from the ideology within which [the text] is held, which permits the reader[spectator] to construct from within the text a critique of this ideology' (Belsey 1980:92).
2. Part of the means by which this is achieved is through undermining 'illusion, to draw attention to its own textuality' (1980:92). In other words, the text exposes itself as a construction. Thus theatre as artifice and performance should be emphasised by invoking theatricality.
3. The interrogative text, also as a means of creating 'internal distance', resists a single, authoritative discourse 'which contains and places all the others' (92). The interrogative text refuses a single, dominant narrative and resists narrative closure and disclosure. The reader/spectator is not presented with a completed story but rather is required to ask questions.

This correlates with Joan Lipkin's comments quoted by Lizbeth Goodman (1993) about feminist/political theatre in which she asserts that '[w]e have to, not necessarily offer

solutions, but raise provocative questions that help us think about issues differently'(16). The implication of posing questions to the spectator is that she is to be an active participant in the creation of meaning in the text, sufficiently distanced from the ideology of the text to be able to critique it. Peta Tait describes the '[r]ecognition of "audience as participant" or as active spectator' as characteristic of 'radical feminist performance styles in recent years'(1994:44). This indicates that characteristics of the interrogative text proposed by Belsey have been assimilated into feminist theatre practices as an appropriate strategy for addressing patriarchal gender constructions.

Understanding the Patriarchal Discourse of Theatre

Having identified the interrogative text as a viable means of subverting gendered ideology in theatre, the next step is to explore how theatrical elements might be used to create an interrogative theatrical text. I intend to begin this exploration by considering how the conservative discourse of theatre uses theatrical elements to achieve the interpellation of gendered subjects, an effect antithetical to that of the interrogative text. Through understanding how the dominant discourses of theatre function, it may be possible to identify strategies whereby they might be subverted.

Like the Classic Realism of literature (Belsey 1980),

the dominant, conservative discourse of [theatre] constitutes an ideological practice in addressing itself to readers as subjects, interpellating them in order that they freely accept their subjectivity and their subjection (Belsey 1908:69).

This is rooted in the suppression, through systems of signification, of the contradiction of the split subject. While Belsey refers to a specific genre of literature, Classic Realism, it is not possible to find one equivalent theatrical genre. There are, in fact, a number of theatrical forms which perpetuate the ideological effect described above. I intend, therefore, to identify the common features which characterise these different genres, as opposed to pinpointing and discussing each individual genre separately.

The writing of Augusto Boal on the ideologies implicit within different theatrical forms is an extremely useful starting point for this discussion. He argues that an

extremely powerful poetic-political system for the intimidation of the spectator, for the elimination of the "bad" or illegal tendencies of the audience....is, to this day, fully utilized not only in conventional theater, but in the TV soap operas and in Western films as well (Boal 1979:xiv).

He identifies Aristotelian poetics as the common basis of these different discursive practices. Consequently, he refers to this system as Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy.

Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy

Aristotle's system of tragedy is characterised by a protagonist or tragic hero (who is invariably male). The protagonist is set apart from the other characters in a number of ways. Not only does he form the subject of the drama (hence fulfilling the position of subject of speech), but is distinguished from the other characters by being in some way more noble/esteemed. When the play starts, the protagonist tends to be in an enviable position of power, as exemplified by Oedipus who at the outset of Oedipus Rex is the King of Thebes. The audience is encouraged to identify with him, thereby vicariously experiencing his elevated position, and the moral status and material benefits that accompany such a position.

In Aristotle's system, plots follows a linear narrative structure. Following the establishment of the world of the drama and the development of an empathetic relationship between the spectator and the protagonist, a complication is introduced. The protagonist, unbeknown to himself, is responsible for this complication as a result of his 'tragic flaw'. He sets about resolving the problem, and, in so doing, ultimately brings about his own fall from grace.

While the protagonist is punished for his hubris against the gods, the spectator escapes, having only undergone the experience vicariously. Aristotle argues that true tragedy will achieve spectatorial catharsis, whereby the spectator

is purged of his own hubris. While Aristotle refers specifically to hubris as the sin of pride against the pantheon of Greek deities, hubris can be interpreted in a contemporary context more generally as a 'sin' against society. What constitutes this sin/hubris will be determined by the social, political and ideological context of the representation. Boal argues, therefore, that catharsis is used to purge the spectator of anti-social, anti-dominant order sentiments. The protagonist's flaw is one that runs contrary to hegemonic values. By vicariously experiencing the protagonist's downfall, the spectator is purged, to a greater or lesser extent, of the same anti-social sentiment. While not all contemporary dramatic plots follow Aristotle's formula of the tragic hero, most employ empathy as a means of manipulation. By engaging the spectator in a vicarious experience of the protagonist's world, the spectator experiences the rewards or punishments associated with certain behaviours.

The Interpellation of Subjects through Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy

Although Boal does not refer to the Althusserian model of the ideological interpellation of subjects in his analysis of the politics of Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy, his critique does, in fact, echo Althusser's theory of the process of interpellation. Boal argues that Aristotle's system is fundamentally disempowering to its spectator, and that the source of this disempowerment is located in the

empathetic relationship between the spectator and the protagonist :

the mechanism [of empathy] (sometimes insidious) consists in the juxtaposition of two people (one fictitious and another real), ...making one of those people (the real one, the spectator) surrender to the other (the fictitious one, the character) his power of making decisions. The *man* relinquishes his power of decision to the *image* (Boal 1979:113)[Boal's emphasis].

In my understanding of Boal's argument, the mechanism of empathy is the process whereby the split subject is concealed. The spectator mistakenly identifies himself with the image in the representation (the Lacanian Mirror) and so is mistakenly led to see himself as the author of the action on stage. He believes in himself as the author of discourse, while he is in fact merely an agent of that discourse, constituted by the discourse.

Character, Narrative and Empathy

There are two factors which are crucial to the successful functioning of empathy in theatrical representation: the construction of character and the construction of narrative. Although other elements of theatre are also employed to create the empathetic relationship between the spectator and the protagonist, character and narrative are, to my mind, the most significant instruments whereby empathy is established.

The empathetic relationship between the spectator and the protagonist requires that the spectator should identify

herself with the protagonist. Thus the construction of character and narrative needs to facilitate this identification. For identification to be achieved, the protagonist and his world need to be recognisable and believable to the spoken subject. The spectator needs to engage with the fictional world as *if* it were real. She needs to believe in it and the characters it presents. In order for the protagonist to be believable, he will need to appear as a complex, multifaceted person with a coherent, stable identity that the spectator can recognise and identify with. If the character and the fictional world are entirely unfamiliar to the spectator, she is unlikely to be able to recognise herself or her environment in the representation. For the illusion of the spectator's identity as coherent, unified and fixed to be reinforced through the performance text, the protagonist's identity needs to be presented as similarly unified and fixed. Any contradiction or fracture should be suppressed.

The use of a linear narrative which achieves closure is essential in suppressing contradictions and fractures. The illusion of the unified, coherent subject is sustained through certain repetitive narrative structures. A common strategy of Classic Realism, described by Belsey, which has a parallel in Aristotle's system of theatre, is the construction of narrative 'which throws into disarray the conventional cultural and signifying systems' (Belsey 1980:70) only to move towards closure which involves 'the re-establishment of order, recognisable as a reinstatement

or a development of the order which is understood to have preceded the events of the story itself'(70). The reinforcement of a particular order/ideology through narrative is further aided by the use of a single, authoritative discourse. This serves to silence contradictory, fracturing discourses which may expose the fragmented, shifting multiplicity of identity.

The use of linear narrative and narrative closure along with the construction of believable, psychologically complex characters 'reproduce[s] psycho-linguistic and ideological structures offering the surface illusion of unity, plenitude, and identity'(Gledhill 1992:193). It masks both the social construction of reality as well as the *semiotic processes of representation*, thereby preserving '[t]he belief that there is a direct or natural connection between an image and what the image represents and what is known'(Cartwright 1994:128).

The concealment of the semiotic processes of representation in theatre occurs particularly in theatrical forms which subscribe to elements of Realism. It is, however, impossible to ever fully conceal the performance apparatus of theatre. While film allows for the almost complete elision of its performance apparatus through its edited, prerecorded nature, the same kind of control cannot be exercised in the live performance of theatre.

Theatre, thus, has to focus the attention of the audience away from factors which disrupt the illusion of the performance, such as missed cues, scene changes, interval breaks, the appearance of stage hands on stage etc. Audiences are capable of ignoring these disruptive factors, and maintaining an empathetic connection with the characters in spite of reminders of the illusory nature of the performance. The impossibility of completely concealing theatrical performance apparatus, however, presents a possible opening for the creation of an interrogative text.

Strategies for a Gender Subversive Interrogative Text

Theatre audiences are generally accustomed to theatre codes and conventions, such as intervals, curtain calls, scene changes and so on. These are expected, familiar aspects of theatre experience. As a result, the audience is unlikely to pay much attention to them. But if audience attention is drawn to these conventions, the spectator's expectations may be subverted. This is of potential value because 'a text which subverts expectations may usefully serve to reawaken...perceptions of [theatrical] construction and the devices which underpin it'(Aston 1991:18). Thus, by subverting audience expectations, it may be possible to bring into focus elements that would otherwise have been ignored.

By '[d]emystifying representation, showing how and when the object of pleasure is made,[a step is taken towards]

releasing the spectator from imaginary and illusory [and disempowering] identifications'(Diamond 1988:83). The exposure of the performance apparatus of theatre can facilitate the creation of a critical distance between the spectator and the world of the drama. Through subverting spectator's expectations, the spectator's comfort may be disrupted and the *illusion* of the fictional world may be exposed.

The critical distance which Belsey contends is central to the literary interrogative text has a theatrical parallel - Brecht's (1974) Alienation Technique or *Verfremdungseffekt*. He developed his theory and practice of 'alienation' as a strategy to challenge the dominant class relations which he felt conventional or 'dramatic' theatre (Boal 1979:95) perpetuated. Brecht's 'violation of formal [theatrical] properties is a political strategy'(Aston 1991:32) aimed at provoking critical awareness of ideological structures in his audiences. Like Butler, Brecht's motivation is to 'show mankind in the process of change, not as fixed individuals as in the concept of Aristotelian drama'(Aston 1991:32). Thus, although Brecht 'exhibits a typical Marxian blindness toward gender relations'(Diamond 1988:83), his 'theorizing of the workings of [the] apparatus of [theatrical] representation'(1988:84) and the practical approach he suggests can be very usefully applied to gender subversion. I shall, therefore, discuss Brecht's theory of alienation and the devices he proposes for its

realisation and then consider how these might be usefully employed to subvert gender norms and expectations.

'The cornerstone of Brecht's theory'(Diamond 1988:84) is alienation or defamiliarisation. He argues that '[a] representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar'(Brecht 1974:192). The objective behind such representation is that the spectator might see something that is familiar in a new, more critical light. Through making something very familiar seem at once recognisable and yet strange, the spectator is placed at a distance from the representation. She cannot, therefore, be drawn into an unthinking identification with the representation. The use of alienation discourages the spectator from 'identification with a unified subject of the enunciation'(Belsey 1908:91), insisting, instead, on critical distance between the spectator and the representation. Thus there is a strong correlation between Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* and Belsey's interrogative text.

The Verfremdungseffekt

Brecht proposes a comprehensive approach to realising his *Verfremdungseffekt* in theatre practice. This approach can be divided into three major areas of concern appropriate to my study: the use of performance apparatus, the construction and performance of character and the use of narrative.

Brecht advocates the exposure of the performance apparatus of theatre. Lighting rigs should be exposed along with any stage machinery, set changes, blackouts, the presence of stage hands etc. All aspects of theatre practice which help to create the illusion of the performance should be emphasised in order that the spectator might be continually aware of watching a *performance*. She should never be allowed to escape fully into the world of the drama.

To this same end, Brecht proposes the use of multimedia in theatre - slides, captions, video clips and so on. These should be used in juxtaposition with the action taking place on the stage. Through the juxtaposition of contradictory images, the spectator may be prevented from losing herself in one perspective of the drama. Juxtaposition may help to make the images seem strange or alien and may enable the emergence of diverse, even contradictory perspectives and ideologies.

While the exposure of performance apparatus is a useful strategy, the way in which Brecht approaches the construction and performance of characters, given the importance of character in the perpetuation of dominant ideology through theatre, is of greater interest to me.

Character

Brecht wishes to keep the audience at a distance from the characters. He rejects the Stanislavskian approach to theatrical representation in which the 'fundamental aim of

[theatrical] art is the creation of [the] inner life of a human spirit and its expression in an artistic form' (Stanislavsky 1937:14). In Stanislavsky's understanding of theatre, the character needs to be represented as a complex, multifaceted, psychological individual. This concept of character is located in a liberal humanist philosophy of human nature.

In Brechtian theatre, characters are understood from a Marxist perspective. The character in Brechtian drama is, thus, 'not *absolute subject* but the object of economic or social forces to which he responds and in virtue of which he acts'(Boal 1979:92)[Boal's emphasis]. Consequently, Brecht proposes the demonstration of characters:

the actor must not lose herself in the character but rather demonstrate the character as a function of particular sociohistorical relations, a conduit of particular choices (Diamond 1988:87).

Brecht reinforces the notion of 'character-object'(Boal 197:95) further by naming characters primarily according to their socio-political positions, and not by individual names. For example, in The Caucasian Chalk Circle there is The Peasant, The Soldier, The Peasant's Mother, and so forth. Brecht emphasises the relationship between characters and their socio-political contexts in order to highlight the impact of ideology on the constitution of subjects.

Brecht proposes the 'not...but' feature of alienated acting to reinforce an awareness of this relationship between

subject, context and ideology. 'When [an actor] appears on stage, besides what he is actually doing he will at all essential points discover, specify, imply what he is not doing; that he will act in such a way that the alternative emerges as clearly as possible, that his acting allows other possibilities to be inferred and only represents one of the possible variants'(Brecht 1974:137).

Narrative

In addition to his defamiliarised style of acting, Brecht manipulates narrative structure to create a critical distance between the spectator and the action. Given that linear narrative that achieves closure is an effective tool for drawing the audience into an acceptance of the world of the drama as natural and thus, as true and real, Brecht fractures his narrative into short episodes. These are punctuated with song, narration, captions and other alienating devices. There is no easy narrative flow for the spectator to be caught up in and she is hence kept at a distance from the action by the staccato narrative framework. The fracture of narrative continuity may also fracture consistency and unity within the performance text. This may allow for the disruption of a single, authoritative discourse, thereby creating the possibility for multiple discourses and perspectives to be articulated.

Alienating Gender

Brecht's strategy of defamiliarisation recalls Butler's proposed interventions into normalised gender codes.

Brecht, like Butler, advocates a disruption of expectations in order that systems of ways of being that are ordinarily taken for granted are called into question. The Verfremdungseffekt, 'the purpose of which is to denaturalize and defamiliarize what ideology makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable' (Diamond 1988:85) is, thus, potentially a highly appropriate strategy for implementing Butler's call for intervention into patriarchal gender codes.

When gender is "alienated" or foregrounded, the spectator is enabled to see a sign system as a sign system - the appearance, words, gestures, ideas, attitudes etc., that comprise the gender lexicon become so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will (Diamond 1988:85).

The Lesbian Subject as a Strategy of Alienation

Highlighting the performativity of identity may take innumerable forms. A possible strategy, but by no means the only one, for the disruption of gender signification and, hence, the alienation of the audience is the representation of the lesbian subject. Dolan (1988) argues that '[t]he lesbian subject is in a position to denaturalize dominant codes by signifying an existence that belies the entire structure of heterosexual culture and its representations' (116) because 'she has no investment in a gender economy based on sexual difference' (Aston 1995:102).

Monique Wittig's (1992) argument, which I referred to in Chapter One is that the lesbian subject defamiliarises the very concept of woman because woman is the heterosexualised

'other' to the universalised male subject, and is hence defined only in relation to man. The 'not woman - not man' (Wittig 1992:13) lesbian who exists outside of heterosexualised relations therefore defies the definition of woman. Thus the representation of the lesbian subject can be a means subverting patriarchal gender norms.

This is, however, dependent on how the lesbian subject is represented. It is crucial that representations should not reproduce the demonising of lesbian into categories of perverse, evil and unnatural. The representation of the lesbian subject should not confirm the existing patriarchal gender categories and norms but rather challenge them. This is not an easy task. In Chapter Four, I will expand on the discussion of the difficulties of representing a lesbian subject, drawing on my experience as a lesbian-feminist theatre practitioner.

Alienation and the Politics of the Female Subject in Performance

The difficulty of representing a lesbian subject is not the only problem gender-subversive theatre practitioners face with regard to representing the female subject. Female theatre practitioners not only meet logistical obstacles such as a lack of funds, institutional opposition, male orientated play texts etc. They are also confronted with the difficulty of representing the female subject within a framework which 'always already' (Butler 1995) connotes the female body as a male orientated sex object. '[T]he female

body is not a reducible sign free of connotation. Women always bear the mark and meaning of their sex which inscribes them within a cultural hierarchy' (Dolan 1988:63). Brecht's alienation technique is useful not only in confounding conventional perceptions of gender, but can also be helpful in addressing some of these problems of representing the female subject.

Bornstein (1995) identifies a diverse range of cues which signify gender. She groups these cues into different categories such as behavioural, physical, mythical and textual. The application of alienation techniques to these cues can help to distance the female subject from her position as sex object within a patriarchal economy.

Alienation and Physical Cues

'Physical cues include body, hair, clothes, voice, skin and movement' (Bornstein 1995:26). Aston identifies three strategies for defamiliarising conventionally gendered physical cues: under-display, over-display and cross-gendered display (1995:94-7). All three of these strategies are intended to subvert the traditional objectification of the female body, thereby addressing the problem of placing the female body on display.

Under-display is essentially the concealment of the female body in circumstances where it is expected that it will be displayed. By concealing the female body either within loose fitting costumes or by removing the female from sight

altogether, the audience expectation is undercut. Attention is thus drawn to the objectification of women through the refusal to place the female subject on display. Over-display, on the other hand, aims to achieve the same objective using the complete reversal of the strategy described above. 'In the instance of over-display, "lookingness" is effected by alienating the vestimentary sign system of the "feminine" '(Aston 1995:94). In practice, this means that conventional representations of the female body which encourage objectification are invoked self-consciously and then exaggerated. Cross-gendered display as the term suggests is the alienation of the female body through the use of costumes connoting the opposite gender. The effect of this is to reveal the arbitrariness with which gender codes are attributed.

While the three techniques mentioned above can be successful in subverting gender norms through costume, 'to challenge the discursive practices of a conservative theatre it is [also] crucial to remake and revolutionise the substance of what the female body is doing on stage'(Tait 1994:120). One strategy for reframing action in this way has been the evolution of female physical theatre, such as all-women circuses:

physical theatre training, in particular circus skills, contradicts socially designated divisions between masculine and feminine bodies. The shape of the physical body is redefined in muscular proportions which interrupt and mock inscriptions of femininity on the female body (Tait 1994:105).

While circus performance and physical theatre are very specific forms of theatre practice, the subversion which they achieve can be incorporated into other theatre practices. The emphasis needs to be on subverting expectations of behaviours 'suitable' for the female body. An important facet of addressing behavioural cues is the use of space and the visible representation of relational gendering through spatial relations.

Spatial arrangements produced in theatre communicate conceptual categories and social divisions such as object-subject, private-public, male-female to the spectator. It is the presence of the physical body within the complex intersection of these conceptual geographies in theatre which offers the possibility of redefining the individual's relation to the social order (Tait 1994:131).

I have explored theoretical possibilities for creating gender subversive performance texts. But as I have already mentioned, there are very definite problems facing women who assume the position of the speaking subject in theatrical representation. Not least of these are the difficulties they encounter in practically realising theoretical strategies for subversion, particularly in relation to successfully representing a female, transgressive subject of speech. In Chapter Four, I shall examine some of the difficulties of implementing gender-subversive strategies, drawing from my experience of making a gender-subversive cabaret, The Soapflake Sonata.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRODUCING THE TRANSGRESSIVE/INTERROGATIVE TEXT:

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF *THE SOAPFLAKE SONATA*

Introduction

In this chapter, I shall develop the discussion of strategies for gender subversive theatre detailed in Chapter Three. I will extend the theoretical concepts proposed in Chapter Three into a critical examination of practical implementation of these ideas. I shall locate the discussion in my experience of creating a gender subversive cabaret, The Soapflake Sonata. I will focus on the challenges associated with implementing strategies for an interrogative/transgressive text, especially the difficulties I experienced in creating a transgressive female protagonist (subject of speech). This discussion is located specifically in the production phase of the theatrical process and is not an evaluation of how the performance text was received. It explores the problems facing the feminist/gender subversive theatre practitioner attempting to realise the theoretical concepts outlined in the previous chapter.

Producing The Soapflake Sonata

Context

In 1995 I devised and directed The Soapflake Sonata for the Drama Department at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Each year, all tertiary institutions which offer theatre studies/drama training in South Africa are invited and sponsored to participate in the Student Drama Festival at the annual Standard Bank National Arts Festival. The Soapflake Sonata (hereafter referred to as Soapflake) was the official entry of UCT at the 1995 Student Drama Festival and was performed both in Grahamstown in the Rehearsal Room at The Monument, and in Cape Town at the Arena Theatre, UCT.

As the official, sponsored UCT production, our accommodation in Grahamstown was provided, and production as well as travel and subsistence costs were covered. Much of the administrative work in terms of organising theatre venues etc. was done for us, both in Cape Town and Grahamstown. This institutional, logistical support placed me in the unusual and fortunate position of being able to concentrate primarily on the artistic aspects of the production.

Objectives

Prior to my invitation by the UCT Drama Department to devise a production for the Student Drama Festival, I had not foregrounded my identity as a woman or as a lesbian in

my work as a student director. I had, however, begun to deliberate on the need to do so in order to challenge the purported gender neutrality of theatre practice at UCT. I was thus determined to declare my position as a transgressive social subject in the directing of Soapflake.

I had no clearly formulated strategy as to how I would foreground my identity in the work. It seemed that the starting point was to select, as themes for the play, issues which concerned me as a lesbian feminist. At the time, one of my primary personal frustrations was with the cost of transgression, given the sacrifices I had had to make in order to claim my lesbian identity. I recognised, however, that while the transgression of social gender codes has costly implications, so too does conformity to those codes. My primary objective in Soapflake was, thus, to highlight the inevitable cost involved in being a woman in a patriarchal society. I also wanted to pose a challenge to the basis of patriarchy by exposing gender as a patriarchal construction, thereby highlighting the potential for the transgression of gender norms. My intention was to use the medium of theatrical performance to deconstruct the myth of woman (Wittig 1992), emphasising gender as a social performance. I was intent upon exploring and exposing the theatricality of theatre performance as a means of exposing the performativity of identity. My final aim was to create a transgressive and transcendent female subject of speech at the heart of a transgressive text.

Strategies

In Chapter Three, I discussed the role of theatrical form in creating particular ideological effects. In conceptualising Soapflake, I recognised the importance of using theatrical form appropriate to the content. Having decided that Soapflake should expose the performativity of gender as well as highlight the cost of gender conformity and transgression, I needed to utilise theatrical strategies and forms that would complement these themes. I wished to expose the artifice of theatre as a means of exposing the artifice of gender.

A primary strategy for exposing theatre as artifice is to foreground the semiotic processes at work in the performance. I decided, therefore, to use the Brechtian approach of exposing the performance apparatus. I was influenced by a video clip of a production of Franz Wedekind's Lulu which employs a cabaret/carnival form in which Jack the Ripper sings a cheery cabaret-style song about carving Lulu up whilst sharpening his knives. The subsequent dismembering of Lulu is done in a highly theatrical, stylised way to the accompaniment of cabaret musicians. There is no attempt to create an illusion of reality. The grotesque theatricality along with the direct address to the audience, the use of a narrator and the use of song appealed to me. So I conceived of Soapflake as a cabaret/carnival freakshow. I wanted to use a combination of cabaret and carnival because both foreground the performance as a performance. There is an overt

exploitation of theatricality, particularly in carnival, which was appropriate to the exposure of the social performance of gender.

I conceived of the carnival as controlled by Sappho who would thus function as the hub of the play. She would be the protagonist, fulfilling the position of the transgressive female subject of speech. I envisaged her functioning as a Brechtian narrator-singer, weaving a complex web of multiple narratives based on common myths, tales and stereotypes of women. I intended Sappho to present these canonised stories with subversive twists and ironies that would highlight the constructedness of these commonly accepted representations of woman. Each of these stories would explore various costs involved in transgressing and/or conforming to the patriarchal construction of woman.

I conceived of Sappho as the subject of speech because of her position as a transgressive mythological subject. Sappho is not only a transgressive figure by virtue of her renown as a lesbian, but also because of her vocation as a poet. As a poet, she was an active female subject writing as opposed to being written; an achievement and transgression heightened by her extremely patriarchal, conservative socio-historical context.

Sappho's identity as a writer/creator, and hence as an active subject, corresponded well with my desire for a

transgressive female subject of speech as well as with the role of narrator/creator which she was to play in the drama. Sappho also appealed to me on a personal level as I saw her as symbolic of my role in the play as creator, as lesbian, as woman, and as speaking subject.

Besides the personal resonances of Sappho as lesbian subject, I saw the potential for Sappho's lesbianism to transcend the patriarchal, heterosexual constructions of gender, thereby pointing to the artificiality of the paradigm. My decision to use lesbianism as a strategy for subversion within the play was heavily influenced by the writing of Butler (1990), De Lauretis (1993), Wittig (1992) and Case (1993). They all argue the potential for the representation of lesbianism to subvert and deconstruct the patriarchal constructions of women, based on the premise that male constructs of woman are determined by the relationship of woman to man within a heterosexual paradigm. Lesbians, as 'not women', offer the potential to debunk the entire patriarchal construction of gender as natural.

I intended Sappho to be the only consistent character running through the play. The remaining four performers would shift in and out of characters according to the requirements of Sappho's different narratives. When not performing a particular role in one of the stories, they would perform the roles of carnival performers. I wanted to create the effect of layering performance over

performance, so that the actors would never appear to have a baseline character or identity. By creating the actors as 'generic' performers, I wished to imply that all identity is performative. I aimed to avoid in-depth, psychologically complex representation of characters that might 'impl[y] a coherence, a consistency and an individuality' (Hayman 1977:50). Such representations of characters would have reinforced the liberal humanist concept of the subject and I intended to fracture gender norms by exposing multiplicity, diversity and inconsistency in identity.

In retrospect, my concept of Sappho as a coherent figure may have been influenced by my identification with the character. I may have imposed my own sense of personal coherence on Sappho as well wishing to be careful about how this lesbian protagonist would be represented. Ironically, the representation of Sappho proved to be my greatest challenge, and was ultimately, the least successful aspect of the production. Some of the difficulty I encountered in realising the concept of Sappho may well have been avoided if I had extended the idea of shifting, multiple identities to her along with the rest of the characters - which I will discuss in the latter part of this chapter.

Although my objectives and theoretical concepts were clear when I began rehearsing Soapflake, I did not have much clarity as to how I was to practically realise my objectives. My subsequent battle to do so is extremely

useful in highlighting some of the challenges involved in making gender-subversive theatre. Following a description of the final performance text, I will identify and evaluate the key strategies I employed, and the challenges I faced in implementing them.

The Final Performance Text

The final performance text of Soapflake, which ran at approximately 55 minutes, was performed by a multiracial cast of 5 female performers and a male pianist in the style of cabaret/carnival freakshow. The play opened with the whip wielding, cross dressing Ringmaster (originally Sappho) [see Appendix A.1] welcoming the audience and inviting them to enjoy the spectacle of her 'creatures' - the female performers on stage with her. In response to the lyrics of the Ringmaster's opening song, the performers transformed themselves into exaggerated images of the women she described [see Appendix B.1]. Having established the frame and tone of the performance in the opening song, the Ringmaster was joined by the Hag [see Appendix A.2] who assumed the role of narrator for the duration of the play. The Hag, a stereotype drawn from the endless string of harridans portrayed in fairytales, myths and legends proceeded to invite the audience to have her read her Tarot cards for them. The other performers, still on the rostra upstage, mirrored the images of the cards she drew, all of which reflected one or other stereotypes of women, such as the Vestal Virgin, or the Vamp [see Appendix B.2]. Her

cards were used as the springboard into each of three stories which formed the main body of the play. Each of the three stories revolved around a core character/feminine stereotype and explored different aspects of the cost of transgression or conformity to social gender roles. The first story, primarily narrated by the Hag, drew from an amalgamation of fairytales. The core character was a Cinderella-type who was persecuted by her ugly step-sisters, Milly and Molly, because of her beauty. Upon enquiring of the magic mirror who is the fairest of them all, they plotted devious means of ridding themselves of their step-sister. Meanwhile Cinderella rejected her fairy godmother's offer to send her to the ball. She chose instead to pursue a career, first in selling arms, then in drug dealing. When she was finally confronted with Milly and Molly's maternal bliss, she exiled herself, grief-stricken at her childless state, to live alone in a forest where she was happened upon by 'two flaxen haired children by the names of Hansel and Gretel' [see Appendix B.3].

The second tale narrated by the Ringmaster was that of the Doll/Kugel [see Appendix A.3]. She filled her days with shopping and dieting whilst waiting for her prince to arrive. When he finally did, they married, he beat her and she ultimately killed him. Consequently, she was locked up in a cage as a 'feminine freak' [see Appendix B.4] on display for the audience, an object of curiosity, horror and moral perversion.

The final story was about the Whore [see Appendix A.4]. She grew up in an idyllic, gender subversive home in which 'Daddy was a seamstress, Mommy was a hunter'. Due to financial distress, she became a porn star, and turned down the lewd advances of Dick, the porn king. He swore revenge but she escaped to take up an offer from the National Party to promote their politics as a token black female figure head. Following this she took up feminist politics until she was exposed by Dick as a porn star and ousted from the Women's Movement. After being raped by Dick, she decided to open a brothel.

All three of the stories were performed in a highly stylised, exaggerated, almost animated, cartoon style. The stories were interspersed with narration, done primarily by the Hag. The Ringmaster functioned mostly as a sardonic observer of the action, song, dialogue, monologues and stylised movement sequences. Apart from the core character of each story, who was performed by the same actor throughout that particular story, the actors assumed a variety of characters, depending on the requirements of each tale. Given the all-female cast of Soapflake, performers played across gender at times when male characters were involved in the stories.

The multiple character changes were not accompanied by multiple costume changes. Each performer was costumed according to the core character she played. Simple props and/or single items of clothing such as hats were used to

indicate the character changes. The costumes themselves were gaudy, in bright colours with sequins, feathers and furs to capture the carnival feeling. The make-up was exaggerated and clearly evident to the audience.

Minimal props were used and the set comprised the piano, a hatstand, a rostra and four cube boxes decorated with gaudy glitter stars. The lighting, like the costumes, was similarly gaudy with orange, magenta, red and blue filters used, along with a white spotlight.

A Critical Evaluation of Gender Subversive Strategies in Soapflake

In my attempt to create a gender subversive text, I employed two primary strategies. Through consciously foregrounding active female subjects, and through highlighting the artifice of theatre, I intended to expose the performance of naturalised gendered behaviours. My choices as regards theatrical style, the use of the various theatrical elements such as costumes, as well as the construction of character and narrative were all informed by these primary strategies. I shall, therefore, evaluate the choices that I made in relation to these two overarching concepts. I will focus primarily on the areas in which I experienced difficulties in order to identify the practical problems in realising certain theoretical concepts.

The Cabaret/Carnival Framework

The use of a cabaret/carnival form for Soapflake was intended to fulfill a number of objectives. It was intended not only to constantly remind the audience of their role as spectators but, over and above that, to foreground the objectification of women. Through the Ringmaster's invitation to the audience to enjoy her freakish creatures, I hoped to draw a parallel to the constant objectification of women in representations. I wished to make the audience conscious of their participation in this objectification. Whether or not this was successful is difficult to ascertain. The convention of direct address to the audience is something that many contemporary theatre goers are accustomed to. Hence it is questionable whether the direct audience address, afforded by the carnival style, achieved my desired objective. On a practical level, however, I did not have any difficulty in implementing this strategy.

Visual Elements: Lighting, Set and Props

In keeping with my intention to expose the artifice of theatre through the cabaret/carnival format, I used a minimalist set with very exaggerated lighting, costumes and props. The lighting, as previously mentioned, was gaudy in an attempt to create the unsubtle lighting effects of a circus or fair. Over-sized props, resembling children's toys, were used sparingly. Here again I experienced little difficulty in realising these strategies practically.

While the carnival framework and exaggerated lighting and props were devices used to maintain a critical distance from the audience and to satirise the absurd, patriarchal constructions of women, I am uncertain as to whether these devices themselves should not have been defamiliarised. My question concerning Brechtian devices is whether they become as engaging and beguiling as a realist performance mode. In Soapflake, it is possible that the colourful, exaggerated performance style became a world which, once the spectator was familiar with it, she was drawn into. The consistent use of style may operate as a conventionalising force that creates unity in the dramatic world. Thus the use of different styles may be an additional way of realising and reinforcing my objective of presenting multiple, fractured identities.

Multiple Narratives

While creating the carnival framework proved to be an easily realisable task, structuring the stories within this framework was problematic. I had wanted to create multiple narratives that spiralled in and out of each other, as opposed to progressing linearly. By creating a complex weave of different narratives, I intended to keep the audience alert. Through subverting the conventional linear narrative's progression and closure, I hoped the spectators would have to keep changing frame and, thus, would not settle into a comfortable, unconscious spectatorship. The multiple narratives were intended to echo the multiple

characters, aimed at fracturing coherence and expressing multiple realities and identities.

In practice, I found it next to impossible to realise these objectives. The drive, both in myself and in the cast members to have the stories 'make sense' was intense. We could not conceptualise the stories in anything other than a linear way. There was both internal and external pressure to construct a coherent plot that had a logical throughline. In retrospect, I understand this in terms of the overwhelming hegemony of the discourse of common sense and logic. The 'need' for sense and order prevailed.

Consequently, the play's structure resembled the episodic organisation proposed by Brecht. The stories followed one after the other, and, although each was broken by music and narration, they all followed a linear structure. Thus, while the concept of multiple narratives weaving in and out of each other is theoretically sound, it presented practical difficulties. It might have been achievable if I had addressed the need for a working method that matched my intended outcomes. As it was, I was using conventional devising processes which did not facilitate the paradigm shift from linear narrative, to multiple, fractured narratives. However, even if I had perceived the contradiction between my objective and my methodology, the pressure to 'succeed' might have mitigated against solving the problem. Both the cast and I felt pressure to prove ourselves, accentuated by the fact that we were all women,

the problem. Both the cast and I felt pressure to prove ourselves, accentuated by the fact that we were all women, working on a feminist piece within an institution primarily shaped by patriarchal ideology.

Narrators and the Construction of Characters

I had initially conceived of using one narrator, Sappho. The concept of using a narrator was located in two objectives. I firstly wanted to locate Sappho as active creator - the story teller at the centre of the play. Through doing so, I not only wanted to foreground active female agency, but I also hoped to highlight the construction of representation i.e. I wanted the audience to see Sappho's characters being created in front of them.

In practice, the difficulty I experienced in realising Sappho as the protagonist of the drama (an ultimately unsuccessful quest) hindered the achievement of this objective. Through the devising process, Sappho/Ringmaster was increasingly sidelined and the Hag emerged as the primary narrator. The intention to expose the construction of the representations of woman through the use of the narrator was not successfully realised. This had little to do with the concept of the narrator. The difficulties arose in relation to the actors' Stanislavskian-based performance training. In Chapter Three, I referred to the liberal humanist foundation of Stanislavsky's method of actor-training. The actors were primarily accustomed to exploring the psychological motivations and impulses of

characters and portraying these complexities. They were, thus, extremely uncomfortable with the concept of shifting identities, personalities and behaviour. In the same way that we had all struggled with the idea of narrative fragmentation and had felt the need for a logical throughline, the actors felt the need to develop a singular character whose actions had complex psychological motivations.

While I wanted a Brechtian demonstration of multiple characters, the performers conceived of the characters in the Stanislavskian terms of becoming enmeshed in the characters. Given the strong Stanislavskian emphasis of the UCT Drama training, it is understandable that the cast had difficulty in moving from performing the inner psychological reality of characters to demonstrating the characters. While the exaggerated, stylised style of performance, that I insisted on, mitigated much of the Stanislavskian method influence, we were unable to achieve the constant shifting of character/reality that I had intended.

Stereotypes

In keeping with the intended demonstration of character was the use of stereotypical representations of women. As I have mentioned, we drew from conventional representations of women in our construction of the characters and stories. The characters were, thus, two dimensional stereotypes intended to highlight the ways in which the concept of

woman is constructed. I am, however, cautious of using stereotypes because there is a fine line between successfully subverting the stereotype and reinforcing it. While our intention was to satirise the stereotypical construction of women, I am uncertain as to whether we achieved this. The representation of Sappho as the butch, whip wielding Ringmaster (an unintentionally stereotypical representation of a lesbian) was particularly problematic in terms of whether it commented on this stereotype or just reaffirmed it.

Costumes

I have similar difficulties with the choice of costumes. Representing the female body on stage is fraught with problems, given that 'the female body is not reducible to a sign free of connotation. Women always bear the mark and meaning of their sex' (Dolan 1988:63). In the same way that we walked a tightrope in terms of the use of stereotypes, we struggled with how to use costume/clothing cues to comment on the male objectification and construction of the female body as opposed to reinforcing it. I had initially wanted to costume the performers in a combination of male and female clothing as a way of visually representing the possibility of performing either gender, regardless of sex. This proved difficult to realise practically and I eventually settled on bold, carnival type costumes.

Given the range of both male and female stereotypes the characters encompassed, we employed all three of the

dressing. The Hag, swathed in a voluminous black cloak had her body completely obscured. No attention was drawn to her physical being, while the Whore was dressed in gold-spangle hot pants, fishnet stockings, thigh high boots and a feather boa, which drew exaggerated attention to her body as female. The Ringmaster cross dressed in a tuxedo and bow tie. The strategy of cross-dressing proved to be problematic as it was unclear as to whether it was the character of Sappho who was cross-dressing, or the actor cross-dressing to perform a male character. The representation of Sappho potentially read as a female actor playing a male character, as opposed to a female actor playing a female character who was appropriating male forms of power. The exaggerated, bold costumes along with extremely exaggerated make up was intended to highlight the deliberateness of the images presented. It is, however, questionable as to whether they were read satirically or not.

The Transgressive Female Subject of Speech

The core issue raised for me by my experience of making Soapflake is the difficulty of representing women subversively within a system in which the objectification of women is entrenched. Creating representations of active female subjects means finding ways to challenge the overwhelming relegation of women to positions of passivity. The difficulty I experienced in realising my initial concept of Sappho is indicative of the problems of presenting female agency on stage.

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Although I had conceptualised Sappho's role in the drama, I did not have a clear idea of how I was going to represent her. When we began rehearsals, I became increasingly aware of the absence of a visual vocabulary for representing women positively in ways which did not subscribe to patriarchal or essentialist views of femininity. I wanted to create an image of a powerful woman but could not find a way of doing so that did not invoke gendered stereotypes of power. For example, I toyed with the idea of Sappho as a caftanned, earth-mother figure but discarded it because of its stereotypical and essentialist association of woman with the earth, and with the role of nurturer-provider. This confirms Butler's assertion of the primacy of gender in subjectivity. It is practically impossible to find any element of human experience that does not have gendered associations and assignments.

The lack of success in trying to find a way of representing Sappho in a powerful and positive way has led me to believe that it is extremely difficult to offer positive alternatives to patriarchal constructions of woman without returning in some way to the oppressive construction of gender within patriarchal discourse. In effect, foregrounding female agency may mean showing the impossibility of a coherent female subject within a

criticism of the play was that it deconstructed notions of women but offered no positive alternatives.

Although the representation of Sappho was a crucial aspect of this success, her eventual portrayal is the facet of Soapflake with which I am least contented. Sappho was ultimately portrayed as the whip wielding Ringmaster in full drag: a menacing presence on stage. Her power came through her threats of violence which invokes associations with conventional notions of masculinity. While the presence of a woman dressed as a man, asserting her control and power in conventionally male ways, is, in itself, subversive of masculinity, I was not happy with the implications of this representation. By Sappho conforming to conventional masculine traits, we were reinforcing stereotypes of masculinity and femininity as well as of lesbianism.

Sappho's position as the transgressive, lesbian protagonist that I had envisaged proved to be contentious among members of the cast. In the final performance text, Sappho had become a peripheral commentator. In spite of my determination to foreground a lesbian protagonist, the internal process of producing the play reproduced the marginalisation of lesbian experience that occurs socially. I cannot account for this easily, and hesitate to oversimplify the issue. There was, however, a degree of passive resistance to the foregrounding of lesbian experience from the cast. Only myself and the lesbian

passive resistance to the foregrounding of lesbian experience from the cast. Only myself and the lesbian performer playing Sappho, were strongly in favour of making lesbian experience visible. The rest of the cast appeared wary of the implications of placing a lesbian protagonist at the centre of the play. Fears about appearing to be man-hating feminists were articulated and there was a great deal of consternation at making too 'radical' a feminist statement. This seems to imply an internalisation of the male stereotype of lesbians as 'man-hating feminists' among the heterosexual members of the cast.

Conclusion

The experience of making The Soapflake Sonata was extremely valuable in highlighting the problems of creating a gender-subversive text, particularly in relation to representing a transgressive, female subject of speech. Many of these problems appear to be located in the extent to which patriarchal ideology has been internalised and is implicit within our ways of thinking and doing. There is, thus, a need to develop appropriate methodologies for the production of gender-subversive texts.

As difficult and ideologically fraught as Soapflake was, it is important that it should have been made, in order that we can begin to develop approaches to gender subversive theatre appropriate to the particular challenges of the South African context. Through this means, a tradition of South African gender-subversive theatre practice that

addresses the intersection of gender with racial, and cultural subjectivities may be established.

In Chapters Three and Four, I have focused specifically on *producing* gender subversive texts. In Chapter Five, I shall consider transgressive/resistant *reception*. I will analyse the reading that results from the intersection of a transgressive social subject with the subject constructed by the text. While the production I have chosen to discuss is not a feminist play, it is a local, South African work that foregrounds the intersection of cultural, racial and gender identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESISTANT RECEPTION:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERSECTION OF THE TEXTUAL SUBJECT AND THE TRANSGRESSIVE SOCIAL SUBJECT IN *MEDEA*

Introduction

In Chapters Three and Four, I focused on the production phase of theatre practice, examining strategies for creating an interrogative or transgressive text. While the text creates a position from which it is most intelligible and most comfortably viewed - its own ideal spectator - the process of production constitutes only a proportion of the process of creating meaning. How the text is received makes up the crucial other half because 'production and reception form a hermeneutic circle, each presupposing the other'(Pavis 1985:93). This is particularly true of theatre 'where the [live] audience can always affect the nature of performance'(Bennet 1990:80).

Although a certain amount of control can be exerted over the performance text in terms of what images are presented, and the positions from which these images are most intelligible, there is no way of controlling exactly how these images will be interpreted by the spectator. The theatre spectator is thus both the passive 'mark or target for the actions/operations of the director, the performers

and, if there is one, the writer'(De Marinis 1987:101) and the active participant who 'carries out the operations of reception'(Bennet 1990:76). The intersection of these two contrasting functions of the spectator is the point at which the textual subject (the ideal spectator), created by the text, meets with the social subject.

The spectator's reading will necessarily 'occur at the intersection of the positions offered by the text and [her] own social/cultural identity'(Bennet 1990:84). Thus 'the differential social and cultural constitution of readers or viewers by class, gender, race, age, personal history and so on'(Gledhill 1992:198) will determine the position from which the spectator views the text. The spectator's reading is consequently influenced by her identity. Given that the individual subjectivity of the reader will have been formed in response to her socio-historical context, her interpretation of the text will be specific to the cultural conventions of that socio-historical context.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how theatrical 'performance usually addresses the male spectator as an active subject...and female spectators as passive, invisible, unspoken subjects'(Dolan 1988:2). It has been argued by various film theorists such as Laura Mulvey (1977) that this places the female spectator in the uncomfortable position of identifying with the male protagonist and in so doing, participating in her own objectification and marginalisation. The paradox of the female subject-as-

object who objectifies herself is thereby reinforced, making the position of the female spectator particularly anomalous and hence, possibly opening it to subversive contestation, if the ambiguity of her position can be rendered conscious.

In the case of the transgressive female spectator, her identity as a transgressive social subject may lead to 'quite a different point of entry than [that] "assumed " by the text...[with the result that] a double level of "mismatches" and competing discourses may be possible' (Swanson 1986:22). Thus the meaning of any text is 'neither imposed or passively imbibed but arises out of a struggle or negotiation between competing frames of reference, motivation and experience'(Gledhill 1992:195).

By recognising the possible counter discourses that may arise from the intersection of the social subject and the subject, created by and referred to by the text, the female spectator is freed from an inescapable position of passivity in which she is acted upon by the text. Teresa De Lauretis (1994) contests the extremely limited and limiting options that other feminist theorists like Mulvey (1977) have identified as the only ones open to female spectators. De Lauretis argues for a theory of female spectatorship that escapes the binary paradigm in which women either have to identify with the active male protagonist or the passive female characters. The approach proposed by Christine Gledhill (1992) acknowledges the

crucial intersection of the social and textual subject and uses it strategically. In so doing, the transgressive female subject's reception of the text becomes the site of possible subversion and resistance. Within this framework, it is possible to work towards the subversion of social gender norms, both from the text to the social subject, as explored in Chapters Three and Four, and from the social subject to the text.

It is my intention, therefore, to consider my experience as a young, white, lesbian feminist middle class spectator of the 1994 Jazzart/Fleishman/Reznek production of Medea as a means of exploring the subversive potential of the intersection of the social and textual subject. I shall discuss first how the text seems to be constructing the textual subject at the point of its address. Thereafter I will examine my experience of the text with a view to identifying the points at which the clash between the social and textual subject created a counter discourse to that suggested by the text.

Selection of Medea

Medea was created in 1994 through a collaboration between Jazzart (a physical theatre/dance company), CAPAB Drama - the Western Cape state-funded performing arts council and the director-choreographer team of Mark Fleishman and Jenni Reznek. It was performed initially in the Arena Theatre, a small theatre venue at the Nico Malan Theatre complex in Cape Town. Thereafter it went on to tour nationally,

including performances at the 1995 Grahamstown Festival of the Arts.

My selection of Medea for analysis was prompted by a number of factors: on the most immediate and personal level, I was powerfully drawn to the production which I experienced as one of the most exciting and inspiring pieces of South African theatre that I have seen in recent years. The (re)interpretation of the age-old myth of Medea from a distinctly South African perspective made a very interesting marriage between a Eurocentric tale and theatrical tradition, and a post-apartheid South African context.

The use of a myth that has been interpreted in countless different ways through the centuries is interesting, as (re)interpretations serve as useful touchstones for analysis of the identity politics of the contexts in which they are created. The myth of Medea is of particular interest to me as it features a female protagonist who finds ways, albeit very costly ones, to take power in the face of great opposition.

Medea's story is, in my interpretation, about the position of women within heterosexual, patriarchal power structures: Medea is seduced by Jason in order that he might obtain the golden fleece that will secure his power in Greece. She betrays her nation and her father, the autocratic king of Colchis, and flees with Jason to Greece. Once in Greece,

Jason abandons Medea to take Creon's daughter as his wife, yet another strategic political move. In the face of her rejection by Jason and her banishment from Greece, Medea summons her magical, Colchian powers and takes revenge. Women in the myth are nothing more than part of a political economy. The story of Medea is the story of her response to this disempowering position.

The myth of Medea, thus, foregrounds issues of women's power and position within patriarchal structures. How these issues are approached in the (re)presentation of this myth is revealing of how gender and power are understood by those producing the representation. The Fleishman/Reznek/Jazzart production, Medea, offers a nuanced interpretation of the myth that does not make its standpoint on the gender politics of the story overt. This may be attributed to the predominance of men in the production team. Imperialism and colonialism appear to be of greater concern than patriarchy. The intersection and clash of different cultural identities form the key concerns of Fleishman's Medea. The story is used as a vehicle for exploring the intersection of different cultural and, hence, linguistic and racial identities, and the impact of colonialist imperialism at a time when South Africans generally were (and still are) attempting to grapple with notions of identity that include race but extend beyond it.

Medea, it seems to me, functions very subtly to reinforce dominant ideology. While the performance text appears to offer a critique of imperialist, colonial and to a lesser extent, patriarchal attitudes and behaviour, by the end of the play these ideologies remain intact. Any threat that Medea poses to patriarchy through her assumption of power is neutralised, in spite of the predominantly sympathetic portrayal of this female protagonist. This is effected through the way in which the spectator is positioned by the text in relation to Medea and Jason.

The Textual Subject

Although Medea is the titular protagonist of the play, she does not feature as the only protagonist of the story. Fleishman sets up Jason alongside Medea as a dual protagonist. He does not, however, immediately align the spectator with either protagonist. On the contrary, neither Medea nor Jason are presented as the overt hero or villain of the piece. The opening scene, in which Medea and Jason begin narrating their individual versions of the same story to their children, presents the audience with the two different narratives with apparent impartiality. Medea and Jason both appear to want their children to hear and sympathise with their respective perspectives on the events which took place. The children are, thus, placed in the position of arbitrators. They do not, however, play an active role in questioning the narratives or in ever actually passing judgement. They are silent, passive listeners throughout the play.

Although the narratives are addressed to the children and not directly to the audience, the spectator's position can be paralleled to the children's. The audience member is the passive listener/observer who is asked to hear both sides of the story and to make a judgement, but who is never allowed to interrogate or comment on what is seen and heard.

The apparent neutrality with which Jason and Medea's narratives are initially presented to the spectator masks the ultimate ideological effect of the spectator-text relationship. Although the text allows for the empathetic engagement of the spectator with Medea through its primarily sympathetic portrayal of her, the particular construction of the dual narratives ultimately neutralises any threat she poses to patriarchal structures.

The Binary Paradigm of Greece and Colchis

At the heart of the Fleishman/Reznek/Jazzart production of Medea is the intersection of two disparate cultures, those of Colchis and Greece. Colchis is, in Grecian terms, a far off, barbarian nation whose resources are there for Grecian plundering. The basis of the intersection of these two cultures is located in Jason's quest for economic and political power. The Colchians have the magical, powerful fleece that Jason requires in order to secure his own status in Greece. His journey to Colchis is as a result of his drive for political power. His desire for the fleece is thus located in its economic values as opposed to its

magical properties for which it is prized in Colchis. His subsequent acquisition of the fleece is uncomfortably reminiscent of the colonialist exploitation of one culture by another for economic and/or political gain, a connection that is reinforced by the image of Jason descending, god-like, from the helicopter to Colchian ground to plant the Grecian flag in Colchian soil.

The oppositional relationship set up by the two contrasting narratives of Medea and Jason is continued in the dichotomous worlds of Colchis and Greece. The performance text establishes two very distinct worlds - Colchis and Greece. The differences between these two worlds/cultures are emphasised through the use of costumes, language, movement, music and colours.

Jason's world - the world of Greece - is presented as harsh and alienating. It is a power hungry, militaristic society in which there is little community feeling or trust between human beings. This is highlighted, for example, in the violence and coarseness of the Grecian mating ritual and Jason's stag party. The feeling of violence, alienation and mistrust is perpetuated through harsh, contemporary heavy metal music that characterises the scenes set in Greece and through the sombre greys, blacks and beiges of the Grecian clothing. The chorus are concealed in identical beige overcoats and bulky Doc Marten boots, which creates a feeling of both anonymity and alienation as well as uniformity.

In contrast to this is Colchis. Here the feeling created is far more harmonious. The rituals emphasise community; the colours are warm and earthy; the costumes expose much more flesh and incorporate natural objects such as feathers, leather, shells etc. The music is not prerecorded as in the Grecian scenes but is made on stage through the use of drums, song and simple instruments. Colchis is created as a far more appealing and engaging space. It is, however, also set up as other. This is partly due to the semi-sexualised sensual, almost animal images which the representations of Colchis evoke, and partly due to how Greece is represented in relation to these 'primitive' elements of Colchis.

I argue that Colchis is created as other because of the strong parallels between the representations of Greece and key aspects of contemporary Western, urban, middle class society. Contemporary Western cultural codes are used in Greece. For example, the costumes are contemporary nineties' clothes; the Grecian rituals recall contemporary club culture; Medea attends therapy in Greece; she and Jason both use cellphones and she consults with her lawyer about her access to the shares, bonds, houses and cars that she and Jason own.

A number of factors point to the likelihood of the average spectator identifying the world of Greece as closely akin to her own context. Given that the Nico Malan theatre complex, where Medea was initially performed, is located in

an urban context, and that it is only accessible in the evenings to patrons who have private transport due to the inadequate public transport system, it is likely that spectators would be middle class, English-speaking, urban dwellers. I specify English speaking as Medea was publicised as an English medium production which is, therefore, most likely to draw a primarily English-speaking audience. Interestingly, although other South African languages are used in the play, colloquial South African English is the only language spoken in Greece. This use of language, combined with codes familiar to Westernised, middle class, English-speaking urban dwellers, functions to position the spectator, who is likely to fulfil most of the criteria described above, in the world of Greece. To urban-dwelling, predominantly English speaking white South Africans, the world of Greece would appear most familiar.

Through creating Colchis as antithetical to the Grecian world, it is set up as a romanticised other to the alienating/alienated industrialised Western world. This is extremely problematic as the images used to represent Colchis conjure up an indiscriminated tribal Africa. This effect is created through the use of distinctly African songs, rhythms and drums, as well as through 'africanised' costumes and rituals. A distinctly rural feeling is created through the warm colours and earth-centred rituals. While English is the only language of Greece, the languages of Colchis included Afrikaans, Xhosa and Tamil, as well as English.

The Othering of Culture

Having established a sharp cultural distinction between Greece and Colchis, and positioned the spectator within the culture of Greece, the association of Colchis with Africa implies a racial divide into Greece as representative of white European and Colchis of black African. Colchis appears to be a mythical, foreign place - a kind of imaging of the idyllic tribal past of Africa. Thus even though the audience may be guided to look with admiration or even respect or envy, Colchian culture becomes an other culture. The Colchians represent a people to be looked at, as opposed to be engaged with as a result of the sign systems which locate the audience so firmly in the world of Greek culture.

Thus the apparent neutral balance of the two different narratives is not sustained. The text, through the images used, definitely locates the spectator in Jason's world but does not necessarily wish to engage the spectator's sympathy with that world or with Jason. On the contrary, Greece is presented in a far harsher light than Colchis. The negative representation of Greece appears to be an attempt at critiquing contemporary Western society and its history of colonisation and exploitation of other cultures. The spectator is, thus, positioned as a politically liberal humanist, sympathetic to the plight of other cultures which have been ravaged by her own.

The construction of this system of binaries - the dual narratives, the two worlds of Colchis and Greece - and the positioning of the textual subject firmly in one side of the binary creates problems. If the performance text is, indeed, intended to critique colonialism and cultural hegemony with its associated patriarchy, the construction of binaries undermines this intention.

Conflation of Gender and Culture

One of the by-products of this oversimplification into a binary framework is that gender is conflated with culture. There are only two female roles in the production, Medea and her nameless nurse, both of whom are Colchians. There are no women represented in Greece. Even the chorus in Greece is androgynously presented. It is thus difficult to discern what aspect of Medea's ill treatment at the hands of the Greeks is due to her foreignness and what part can be attributed to her gender. There are no Grecian women to serve as a touchstone for this. While on the one hand, the absence of women in Grecian culture serves to highlight the intensely patriarchal structures of Greece, it also results in the loss of an opportunity to consider the construction of femininity in different cultures. An element of the different construction of femininity in Colchis and Greece is touched on when Jason admonishes Medea about her appearance. He criticises her shaven head as unfeminine by Grecian standards. This is an interesting moment that highlights the construction of Greek femininity, especially as we see Medea changing her clothing and hair style in

order to be more culturally appropriate. The absence of other women in Greece, however, prevents any further development of these insights.

Medea's cultural alienness and her gendered womaness are conflated. Her cultural otherness becomes indistinguishable from her gendered otherness. Consequently, she and her nurse are located within the otherness of Colchis with the result that femaleness is othered along with non-Western/Eurocentric cultures.

I would argue that the representation of gender and culture is further problematised by the gendering of the Colchian and Grecian societies. The contrasts between Greece and Colchis are not only accentuated and used as the basis for creating a binary discourse between the two, but this binary system is compounded by the process of masculinising Greece and feminising Colchis.

Greece and Colchis are gendered i.e. the places are imbued with masculine and feminine characteristics respectively. Current South African stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity are used as the defining characteristics of Greece and Colchis. Greece is described by Jason as the world of men, an image that seems to be taken quite literally in the absence of women. The idea of Greece as masculine space is reinforced by the association of traditionally masculine traits with Greece. The conventional South African association of men with the

military is reinforced by Creon appearing as a military leader. Grecian rituals, in contrast to the more gentle Colchian ones, are reminiscent of traditionally male orientated blood sports. For example, the Grecian wedding/mating ritual involves Jason and Medea being thrown against each other to the accompaniment of harsh laughter and catcalls.

Colchis, on the other hand, is associated with the earth, both through the colours used as well as through the emphasis and contact with the earth that is evident in Colchian rituals. The earth has traditionally been feminised, being strongly related to images of woman and mother. Colchis is also described as the land of dreams and of magic. Both of these qualities are also conventionally constructed as feminine.

Thus Colchis becomes conflated with woman and Greece with man. This is not only intensely problematic from the perspective that these associations are based on stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity, but also that Greek colonialism is thus represented in gendered terms. Jason's colonialist assumption of ownership of Colchis through the planting of his flag resonates with overtones of the male conquest of passive female territory. Even more significantly, the gendering of Colchis and Greece has implications for the spectator who has been positioned within Greek culture. By virtue of the gendering of culture, the spectator's position within

Grecian culture is gendered as male. The textual subject, having been located in the world of Greece, is thus constructed as male through the association of Greece with masculinity.

The spectator is positioned as male without necessarily having to identify with Jason. As I mentioned earlier, Medea is primarily sympathetically portrayed and the spectator is given the freedom to engage with her empathetically. Her assumption of magical power in the final scenes in the play is extremely engaging and, in many respects, very cathartic. It is, however, neutralised of any real threat to the patriarchal system which it attacks. This is partly due to the othering of gender and subsequent positioning of the spectator as male, which I have described. It is also due to the positioning of Medea within a heterosexual framework.

The Heterosexualised Framework

Accounting for Medea's decision to betray her family and country as motivated by heterosexual passion heterosexualises the system of binaries which underscore the performance text. Jason-Medea, Greece-Colchis, these gendered binary oppositions thus incur an additional overlay of sexual difference rooted in heterosexual relations. As a result of the lack of critical comment on the gender relations in Colchis, Medea in her betrayal of her people appears to be 'typical', whimsical woman. There is no deeper questioning of why she made the choices that

she did. It is sufficient that she should have made the choice she did on the basis of heterosexual desire as opposed to a possible desire for power, or for freedom from a repressive culture. By explaining Medea's actions within a heterosexual paradigm, the threat of her rebellion is lessened. It is possible to attribute it to her having been thwarted in love, or to the 'jealous, first wife' syndrome.

The Gendering of Power

The final means by which Medea's actions are robbed of any threat is by the gendering and subsequent othering of different types of power. As a result of the conflation of gender and culture - i.e. the masculinisation of Greece and the feminisation of Colchis - power is constructed differently in the two contexts. The power in Greece is military. It is the power of aggression and threatened violence coupled with economic power. Thus the traditional associations of male power as economic and political, based on the implicit threat of violence are reinforced.

The power of Colchis is magic. The Colchian King, although an autocratic male ruler similar to Creon, pits Jason against the magical powers of his kingdom. The association of Colchis with femininity implies that female power is to be found in alternative/other, supernatural forms. Female power is not economic or political power. Thus when Medea decides to take her revenge by using her magical, conjuring power, she does not constitute any real threat to Jason's

patriarchal power base. It is Jason, not Medea, who occupies centre stage at the end of play being crowned as king.

While this coronation is offset by Jason's show of grief at the loss of his children and his bride, the personal cost of Medea's revenge is overshadowed by the emphasis on Jason. The play concludes by reinstating the patriarchal order literally and theatrically through the coronation of Jason and through his final positioning centre stage.

Ideology and Theatrical Form

The textual subject created by Medea appears to be fairly consistent with hegemonic identity: westernised, urban dwelling, middle class, English speaking, white, heterosexual and male. Interestingly, the performance text in its sympathetic representation of Colchis seems to be critiquing these hegemonic power relations. The harsh, unfavourable representation of Greece in comparison with the far more sympathetic representation of Colchis can be interpreted as a critique of the history of Western cultural imperialism and interference. While Jason boasts of Grecian civilization, mocking Colchis as a land of barbarians, Greece is, in fact, represented as the barbaric land and Colchis as a 'civilised', dignified culture. Although this is offset by the association of Colchis with animal/natural.

The critique of Western cultural imperialism is not only undermined by this association of Colchis with the natural/animal, but is also severely undercut by the binary relationships set up by the text. Ironically, the cultural imperialism which the performance text seeks to question is reproduced in the way in which the spectator is positioned. The textual subject is positioned at the heart of hegemonic discourse and, although this is criticised through the negative representation of Greece, the very process of othering that is central to cultural imperialism is reproduced. Colchis is the romanticised other.

Butler (1990) argues that the epistemological framework of the subject-object relationship is a construction which is not challenged as a construction at a discursive level and hence is not challenged in terms of the power relations it conceals. The dichotomous division of things into binary opposites lies at the heart of the patriarchal, colonialist framework. The play engages in a process of othering culture which is compounded by the gendering of culture. This results in the gendering of power which finally leads to the perpetuation of gender and cultural stereotypes, and the reinforcement of the very politics which the play attempts to critique.

Whilst the presence of a double narrative, presenting two different perspectives on the same events may appear to break with the conventions and hence ideology of the Classic Realist text in which a single, closed narrative is

used to effect closure and ideological stability, my experience of the text was that it worked to the same ideological ends described by Belsey of the classic realist text.

Medea seems to aspire to certain aspects of an interrogative text. The use of the dual narratives appears to be an attempt to foreground contradiction that is reinforced through the lack of narrative closure at the end of the play. There is no satisfying resolution. On the contrary, the play ends with both Medea and Jason seemingly trapped in the tragedy of the events. Neither manages to transcend or triumph in the space. This attempt at contradiction is, however, undercut by the relationship set up between the text and the audience and the positioning of the spectator by the performance text.

The Cape Town venue for the performance of Medea was the Nico Malan Arena Theatre. This is a small, intimate venue with the stage space on ground level, and raked audience seating on one side. The size of the space necessitates the close proximity of the spectator to the action. In Medea, the audience is, hence, very close to the action. In spite of the close proximity of actor to audience, the audience are never acknowledged by the performers. Thus the audience is placed in an intimate, voyeuristic and passive relationship to the performance. Earlier I discussed the parallel between the role of the silent,

listening children and the silent, voyeuristic audience. At no point are the audience made aware of themselves as spectators. No attention is drawn to the performance as a performance. On the contrary, the worlds of Colchis and Greece are established in such a way that the spectator is drawn into these mythical worlds. As I have already discussed, the spectator is not, however, drawn into each of the worlds in the same way. Through the positioning of the spectator as westernised, middle class, heterosexual male in the context represented by Greece, Colchis and Medea are necessarily viewed from some distance. This creates an interesting conundrum for the women in the audience who identify with the Grecian context as the world with which they are familiar and yet who, as women may identify with Medea, and hence are caught between their own dominance as Western and their marginality as women. The textual and social subjects create an uncomfortable intersection that may allow for an alternative, subversive reading of the text.

The Transgressive Social Subject

At the outset of this chapter, I referred to the possibility of a counter or resistant reading of the text arising out of the intersection of the position of the spectator as social subject and as textual subject. The likelihood of a resistant spectator will be determined by her position as subject within the social performance of gender and her *consciousness* of this position. While very few spectators ever fulfill, as social subjects, all the

criteria of the ideal spectator, they do not necessarily register the discrepancies between their position as social subjects and their position as subjects spoken by the text. This may be as a result of the internalisation of the norms of the ideal social and textual subject. It is the transgressive spectator who is conscious of, and who responds to these discrepancies. She is likely to be a transgressive social subject who, in some way, contravenes or resists the gendered role she is expected to perform socially. Through the contravention of the social performance of gender, the transgressive social subject may be conscious of gender norms and performative conventions and the ways in which she transgresses them.

There are many points at which social gender conventions can be and are transgressed. As Holly Hughes, quoted by Elaine Aston, has said '[a] lot of people have experienced being an outsider. Everybody feels queer in some sense of the word'(1995:106). My own experience of 'queerness', and, hence the most significant point of social transgression, has been in occupying the not-man, not-woman position of lesbian. It has been through my experience of not fulfilling expectations of appropriate feminine behaviour and dress, that my feminist consciousness has developed. As a result of not conforming to gender codes, and the penalties attached to non-conformity, I have come to question the paradigm which prescribes them. Given the significance of my sexual orientation in making me a consciously transgressive social subject, I will use my

position as a lesbian, feminist spectator of Medea to illustrate the possibility of counter-readings of the text.

As a white, middle class, urban dwelling, English-speaking, Westernised individual, I am firmly located by the text in the culture of Greece. The cultural codes of Greece are ones that I recognise as closely related to the context within which I perform my social identity. As a woman, however, I am forced to straddle the binary divide between Greece and Colchis. Thus while I am situated in the seat of dominance, I simultaneously occupy the position of other.

This position of other is compounded by the heterosexual discourse of the text. As a lesbian, I generally find representations which reinforce heterosexual dynamics alienating. I do not engage easily with a heterosexualised story line as the male-female love quest holds little interest or relevance for me. Consequently, when watching Medea, I did not lose myself in empathetic engagement with Medea and Jason's passionate love affair. On the contrary, I was distanced from the story and found that the heterosexualised explanation of Medea's betrayal of country and kin for the love of Jason was unsatisfactory. This may not, however, be entirely attributable to my position as lesbian subject. As opposed to being swept up in the plot, I remained a critical observer, asking questions about Medea's other motivations for her decision as well as feeling little sympathy for Medea's ultimate predicament.

Thus, instead of having Medea's actions explained away by 'love', my own prejudices towards the inadequacies of heterosexuality were reaffirmed. Watching Medea, I found that I was critically aware of the heterosexual paradigm which the text promotes. As opposed to engaging empathetically with Medea's love for Jason and therefore understanding the sacrifices she makes for love, I maintained a distance which enabled me to critique the way in which the text stereotypes women, and the extent to which it reinforces heterosexuality as a norm.

While the text establishes Jason as Medea's co-protagonist, my position as social subject resulted in my attention being directed towards Medea alone. I was disinterested in Jason's version of events. Consequently, his presence on stage was primarily irksome to me and I found that I was drawn to watching Medea or other characters rather than Jason.

My position as a lesbian spectator allowed me to foreground that which was in the background or excluded from the text altogether. Through becoming accustomed to seeing very few representations of 'queer' subjects, I have become skilled at 'reading between the lines' - a skill I share with many people from the queer community. Any intimation of alternative sexuality or potentially homoerotic relationships that may go largely unnoticed, is likely to be perceived by the queer spectator. Ironically what is not spoken by the text will, most probably be 'heard' by

the queer spectator. In Medea, I found myself watching the interactions between the female members of the chorus, even at times when they were peripheral to the action on stage. My interest was engaged by the presence of a lesbian performer who was a member of the chorus. I was curious to see how she would represent her role in the chorus. Thus, her position as social subject which was recognisable to me because she and I are similarly positioned, created a point of transgression in my reading of the text. My recognition of her as a lesbian overlaid the constructed meaning of the text with my interpretation of her performance. Her social identity became infused with her fictional identity and through this fusion, the seamless worlds of Colchis and Greece were fractured for me.

Conclusion

Through this brief discussion of how my position as a transgressive social subject created ruptures in the meaning presented by the text, I have intended to highlight the crucial two-way interaction between spectator and text. The spectator is not necessarily entirely passive, readily absorbing the ideology implicit within the text she observes. The potential exists for the unspoken spectators to occupy subversive and, hence, powerful positions in relation to the dominant discourse within the text.

CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation by arguing that the heart of patriarchal oppression is not located in external acts of male domination and violence, although these persist in contemporary society to the extent that they might well be considered to constitute a veritable war against women. It is my contention that this misogynist abuse of women continues to the degree that it does for the very reason that gender oppression is internalised. The subjugation of women by men is primarily facilitated by the ways in which women and men understand, experience and perform their gender identities. Thus the key to dismantling patriarchy lies in altering how women and men perceive and enact their gender. Through the social transgression of the naturalised, patriarchal constructions of gender, interventions (Butler 1990) can be made into the very structures upon which patriarchy depends.

Based on Butler's theory of the performativity of gender, I have sought to explore the interaction between the social and theatrical performances of gender, examining how interventions into the theatrical enactment of gender might be made, and how this might facilitate intervention within the social paradigm of gender performance. There is a temptation, when considering this relationship, to propose

theatre as a potential miracle worker, given the very strong theoretical correlation between the theatrical and social performances of gender identity. In practice, however, the lived reality of gender is far more complex, and difficult to resolve than such an assumption would imply.

Given my deliberate attention, throughout my discussion, to the relationship between theoretical 'idealism' and practical realities, I do not intend to conclude this discussion by offering an inflated view of what theatre can do to challenge the patriarchal interpellation of gendered subjects and its outworking in the ongoing social performances of gender. On the contrary, I am all too aware of the extent to which patriarchal ideology is internalised by individuals and the unquestionable impact this has on people's perceptions and experiences of themselves. As Solomon argues '[g]ender...is not a role that is easily discarded or even taken on' (1993:39). I do not presume, therefore, that theatre can easily alter the deeply entrenched, ideologically informed perceptions that individuals hold of themselves.

Having stated this, I do, however, see potential for theatre to challenge this internalisation in a unique way. This potential is located in two fundamental characteristics of theatre practice: the use of the live human body as primary signifier and the inherently social, communal basis of live performance. The representation of

the tangible human form has direct bearing on the gendered body as articulated within social paradigms. It offers the possibility of foregrounding and exposing the ideological constructions of 'natural' gender roles. This possibility, combined with the communal foundation of theatre, may allow for exploration and emergence of new understandings of gender in relation to self and society. The historic roots of theatre point to how theatre has been and, hence, can be used by a community to make meaning of, and celebrate their collective and individual experiences. This is, however, entirely contingent upon how the medium of theatre is used.

In Chapter Three, I argued the need for an awareness of how patriarchal ideology is reinforced through conservative theatrical discourses and proposed the employment of consciously gender-subversive strategies in theatre. If theatre is to be used at all successfully in encouraging and supporting gender subversion and transgression, there is an unquestionable need to transgress conventional theatrical forms. More often than not, in conventional theatre practice, theatrical production does not rest in the hands of women. Thus they do not represent themselves or make their own meaning of their experiences. Instead, meaning is made of them and for them by the male controllers of cultural production. These representations tend to promote an understanding of gender that supports patriarchy, reinforcing the interpellation of women within the confines of patriarchal gender norms.

If gender oppression is to be challenged through theatre, then there is a need to return to the communal basis of theatre in which theatrical representations are made by the group whom they represent. A forum in which theatre has begun to be used to this end has emerged recently in Cape Town. The Women's Cafe, started in 1997, is held once a month and provides a platform for performance as well as an informal gathering place for women. The performances are generally performed by non-'professional' actors and are often quite subversive of conventional theatre practice. Women frequently appear on stage still using scripts, lines are missed or spoken badly and the anxiety produced by being on stage is seldom disguised. This lack of 'professionalism' does not generally inhibit audience enjoyment. This may be attributed to their seeing their lives and experiences articulated and celebrated by friends, family or colleagues.

While I do advocate the use of theatre in sophisticated and skilled ways, the Women's Cafe demonstrates the reclamation of theatre by a group of people. Theatre as a means of cultural production has been removed from the realm of the 'experts' and is being used by women concerned with representing themselves to themselves and each other. This is a promising example of how cultural production can be used to empower women to claim a position of agency.

The Women's Cafe provides a much needed space in which women can take positions of agency, as both makers and

spectators, without the constant struggle with the habitual domination of men. It is, however, far from sufficient to fill the absence of gender-subversive theatre in contemporary South African theatre practice. Not only does it occur infrequently but within the forum itself, there is not a skilled or conscious use of theatrical form. Consequently, theatrical forms and devices, entrenched in patriarchal ideology are often employed.

I do not propose that a more professional forum be established separate from the Women's Cafe, but rather that women with theatrical skills both use the Women's Cafe as an opportunity for performance as well as transferring their skills to other women within the collective. In the current South African context of the general funding crisis and lack of audiences facing most South African theatre practitioners, initiatives such as the Women's Cafe need to be supported and protected.

I would conclude my discussion by proposing that action be taken on the microcosmic level of individual contribution. Although the sphere of influence of work undertaken on a small scale may be limited, it is an invaluable step towards developing gender-subversive theatre in South Africa.

APPENDIX APHOTOGRAPHS OF *THE SOAPFLAKE SONATA*

4 - The Whore

3 - The Doll

2 - The Hag

1 - Sappho



2 - The Hag

3 - The Doll

1 - Sappho

APPENDIX B

EXTRACTS FROM THE SCRIPT OF *THE SOAPFLAKE SONATA*

Extract 1.

SAPPHO'S PROLOGUE

We have tales to tell
familiar fables.

We have a thousand strands to weave, to spin,
yarns up our sleeves.

So let us tell you our stories
So let us sing you our songs.
We're here to entertain, enthrall and entice
with tricks and turns about the stage.

So you settle down, you sit back,
leave all your thoughts outside the door.
Heaven forbid you should ask or question,
no, no, take time to escape.

Watch with delight these curious creatures
interesting beasts, fabulous freaks.
The carnival, here before your eyes,
to shock, delight and tantalize.

*See with horror the ugly hag,
evil stepmother, wicked witch.*

*Those who connive with womanly cunning
All those women we despise.*

Proud gentlemen and ladies who are gay
step right inside and look around the zoo
with burning pleasures, icy shudders too.
The show is just beginning...come and see our Gypsy Lady,
who, with her cards, our fortunes will tell.
The seer, the psychic, the shaman, the witch ?
She shuffles her cards those powerful guides,
so listen closely to the morals they provide.

Extract 2.

(HAG'S TAROT SONG)

Come let me enthrall you tonight
dealing my cards just right
Sit down with me
the first round is free.

Behold the ladies before you,
Dudu, Dolores and Peggy Sue.
Pretty, but what can they do ?

Hmm...The vamp, the whore.
This temptress is full of lust.
Her, I suggest, you do not trust.

Ah. Here you see girls as they ought to be.
The Vestal Virgin, innocent and pure.

Modest, chaste and always demure.

But the card begins to change
it will speak.

It demands I tell the tale
of the maiden who went astray
to warn others from going that way.

Extract 3.

HAG: Instead of taking her Fairy Godmother's advice and
 doing something quite nice, Zubaida made a packet at
 the head of an arms dealing racket. Consumed by
 greed, she lost the charm and beauty that women need.

SAPPHO: Once the war was done, not knowing what was to
 come, she turned her attention to things of greater
 dimension... she set up shop in Cuba. (*hands her*
 cocaine)

HAG: There is little left to say. The cards have
 spoken. My tale is almost told. The moral is clear,
 plain for all to see - Zubaida, our vestal virgin gone
 astray, realised the error of her ways too late.
 Never to be a mother or a wife, she grew even uglier.
 Bitter and twisted she went to live in the heart of a
 dark and brooding forest. *Nothing was heard of her*
 until two flaxen haired children by the names of
 Hansel and Gretel happened upon her eery house. But

that is another story. Milly and Molly, however, went on to live in suburban bliss with hubby and kids....happily ever after.

Extract 4.

SAPPHO: Roll up, roll up, come and see our caged curiosity, the world's greatest monstrosity. She's our feminine freak. In appearance, gentle and meek, but this is a creature with a most unnatural streak. Look and leer while I make her story clear. It's a sensational tale full of tragedy and horror. You'll shake and shiver. Fear for your lives whilst you witness how she connives.

SAPPHO: *Stop! We will go no further. Her deeds are too grisly and sordid to be presented before you, our gentle audience. Let it suffice that she is of the Clytemnestran breed, a Bobbit in her beastly ways. She killed him one night, with a knife she had from the girl guides. To think, a woman with such feminine flair, could perform such a gruesome and ghastly deed...She is a fiend, a freak most foul, put here in this cage for you to see.*

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